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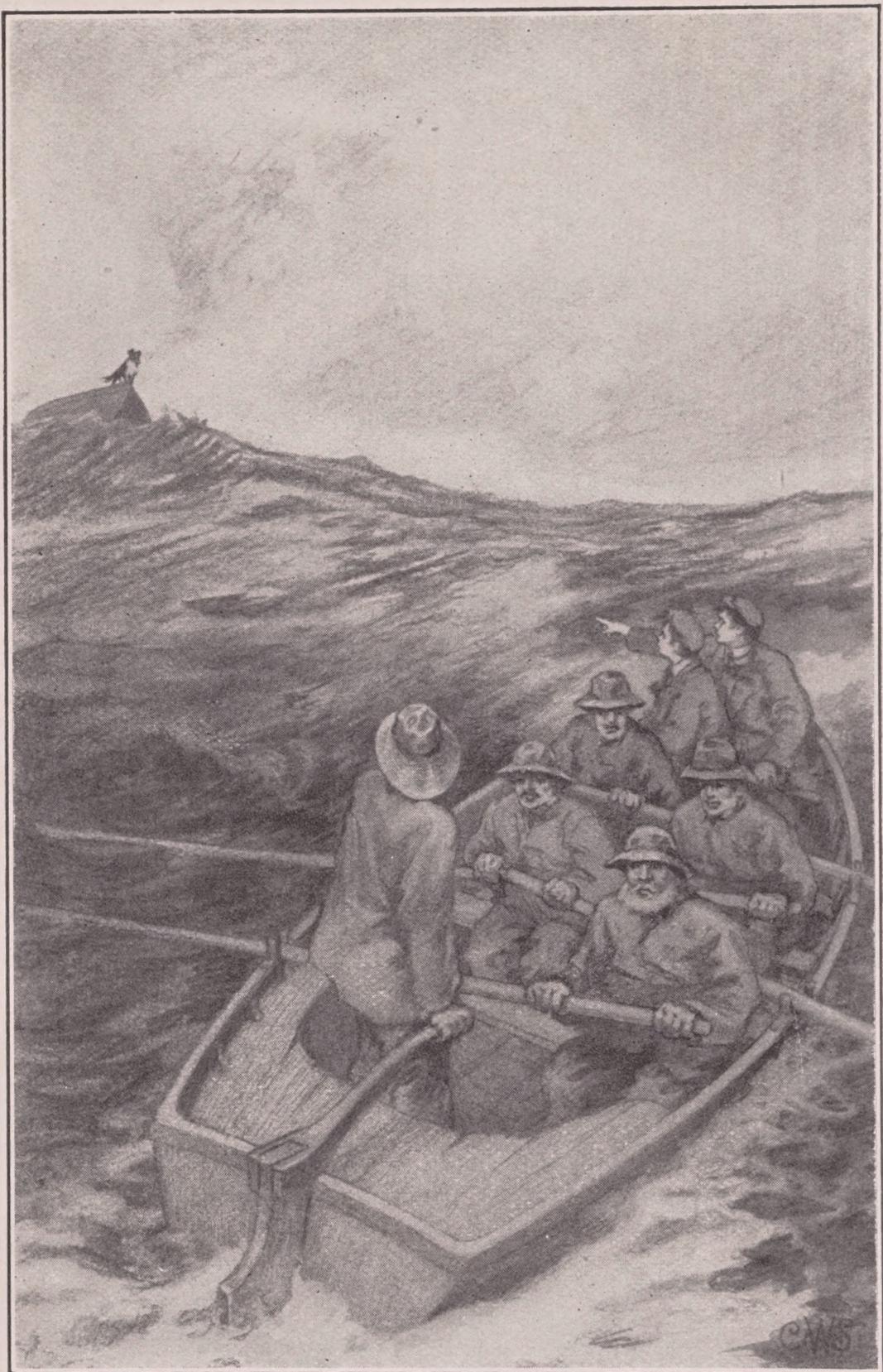












*“‘ There bain’t no doubt but what  
that’s a dog’ ”*

Page 58

# Five Months on a Derelict

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OR, ADVENTURES ON A FLOATING  
WRECK IN THE PACIFIC

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**Edwin J. Houston, Ph. D. (Princeton)**

Author of "The Boy Prospector," "The Boy Geologist,"  
"The Boy Electrician," "The Search for the North  
Pole," "The Discovery of the North Pole,"  
"Cast Away at the North Pole," "The  
Wonder Book of Volcanoes and  
Earthquakes," etc., etc.



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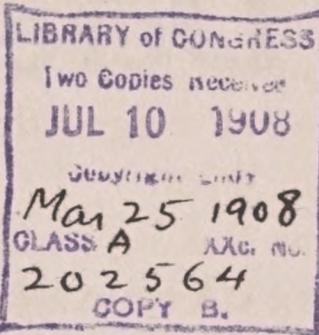
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## PREFACE

IN "Five Months on a Derelict," the author tells a story of the sea connected with the wreck in the China Sea of the *Ketrel*, a full-rigged ship bound from Liverpool to Yokohama, Japan.

As the *Ketrel* was sinking its crew took to the boats. In one of these boats, commanded by the first mate, Lieut. Arthur Harding, were Hiram Higgenbotham, boatswain of the *Ketrel*, Harold Arthur Harding, and John Parker Jackson, young English lads, and two of the crew. During subsequent storms that continued for five days, the boat was wrecked during a dark night by a derelict brig. With the exception of the two of the crew, who were swept overboard during the storms, they all safely reached the deck of the brig accompanied by a collie dog they had picked up from a floating boat.

The derelict brig, although water-logged, owing to its load of lumber and cork, as well as to the presence of water-tight compartments, floated sufficiently high to leave its cabin and its hold between decks free from water. They therefore found in a part of its cargo stored in the hold between decks, sufficient canned goods and other groceries to supply them with food for several months. Moreover, the water tanks were intact, and nearly filled with fresh water.

## PREFACE

In the story that follows the author has endeavored not only to interest the reader by the strange and exciting adventures the men and boys experienced during a period of five months in the Pacific, but at the same time to give them no little information concerning both the causes of ocean currents and the physical features of the Pacific Ocean.

An extended experience with boys leads the author to hope that besides furnishing attractive reading matter, the book will not be destitute of educational value.

PHILADELPHIA, January, 1908.

E. J. H.

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## CHARACTERS

HAROLD ARTHUR HARDING, }  
JOHN PARKER JACKSON, } English lads and chums.

CHARLES YOUNG PLEASANTON, an English lad from Australia.

WILLIAM M. PARKER, captain of the Ketrel and guardian of Jackson.

LIEUTENANT ARTHUR HARDING, uncle of Harold and first mate of the Ketrel of London.

GEORGE HARDING, of Yokohama, Harold's father.

HIRAM HIGGENBOTHAM, boatswain, a Yankee.

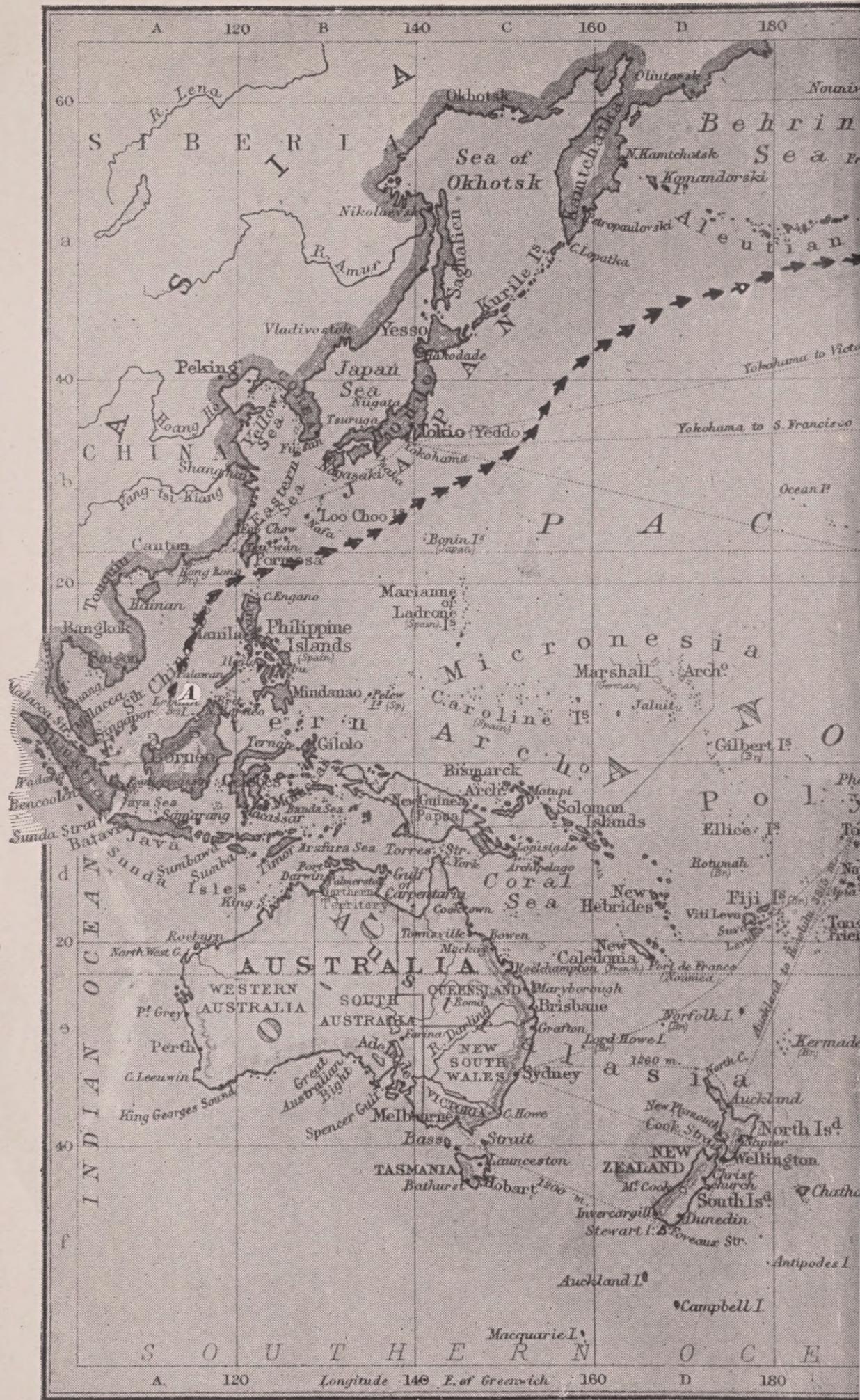
DR. CHARLES B. PARSONS, a passenger on the brig before she became a derelict.

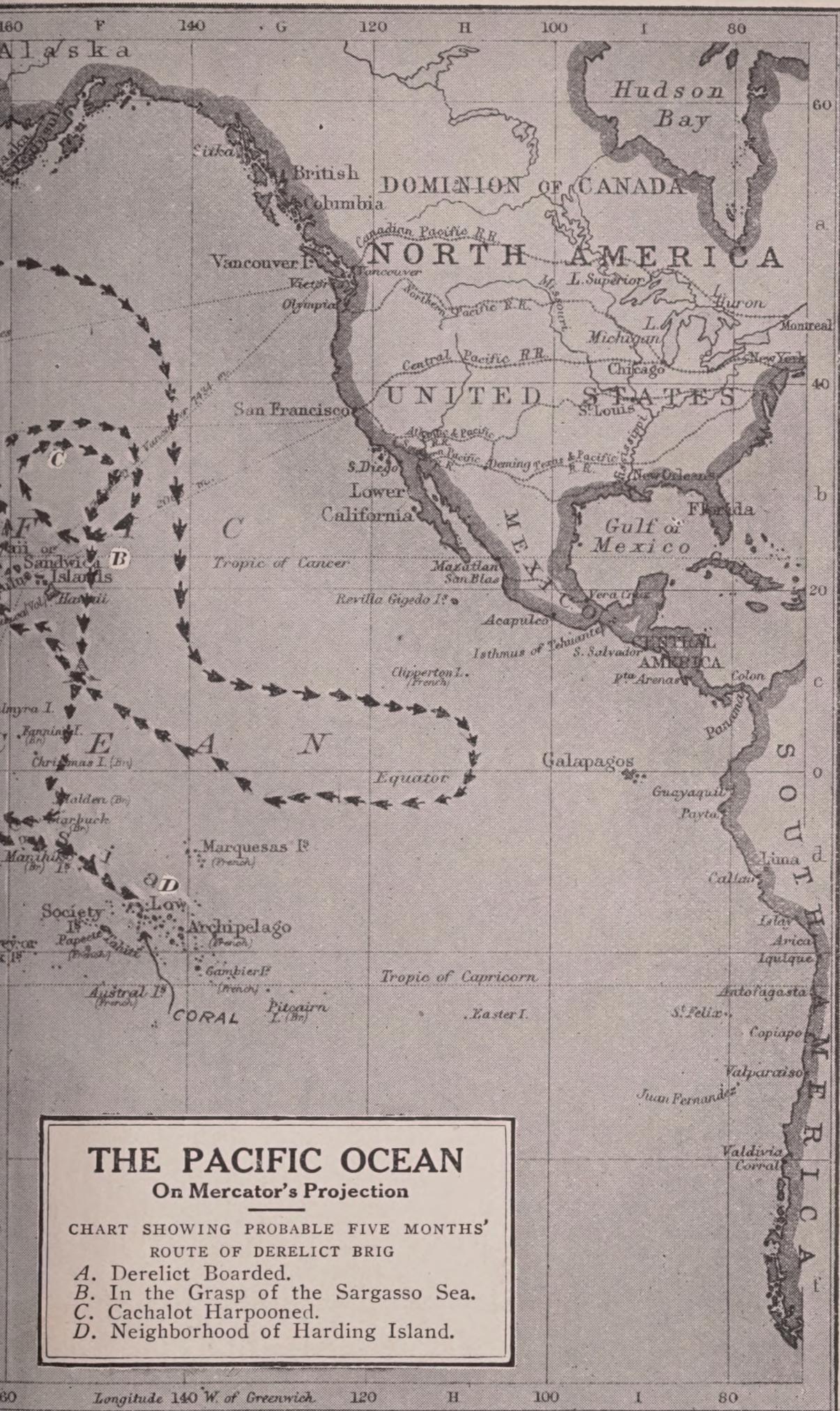
ROMPEY, a full-blooded collie dog.

SATAN, a poll-parrot.

OFFICERS and CREW.







# THE PACIFIC OCEAN

On Mercator's Projection

CHART SHOWING PROBABLE FIVE MONTHS'  
ROUTE OF DERELICT BRIG

- A. Derelict Boarded.
- B. In the Grasp of the Sargasso Sea.
- C. Cachalot Harpooned.
- D. Neighborhood of Harding Island.



# Five Months on a Derelict

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## CHAPTER I

### THE KETREL OF LONDON

“SOMETHING in sight on our weather bow, sir!” cried the lookout on the Ketrel of London, to the second mate, the officer then in charge. “Looks like the wreck of a schooner.”

The officer at once began scanning the horizon with his glasses, saying to himself, as the different parts of the wreck came into view:

“All her masts gone; broken off near the deck. Rails completely swept overboard; appears to have been burned to near the water’s edge.” Then calling to one of the crew, he said: “Report to the captain the wreck of a schooner in sight on our weather bow.”

The officer then beckoned to the first mate who was standing near him conversing with two boys, and when that gentleman approached, accompanied by both boys, he said, handing him his glasses:

“What do you make her, Harding? Looks as if she’d been in the water for a long time, don’t she?”

The first mate took the glasses and exclaimed after a careful look:

“Yes, she’s water-logged. Doubtless a derelict floating with the currents, and ready to tear a hole

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in the bottom of any luckless vessel that may chance to be struck by her on a dark night."

"What's a derelict, Uncle Arthur?" inquired the youngest of the two boys. "I remember once while at Eton, when I had been cutting my work, the head master hauled me over the coals and said I was very derelict in my studies. Why do you call that wrecked schooner a derelict? Has she been failing to do something she should have done?"

"Shut up, Harold; at least for a while. Here comes the captain," remarked the other boy good-naturedly, but in a low voice.

"All right, Jack," was the reply; "I'll keep mum while the captain is here. But you'll tell me afterward, won't you, uncle?" he said turning to the first mate.

"Yes, Harold, I'll tell you," was the reply. "Ask me at the first opportunity, and I'll tell you many strange stories about derelicts."

As Captain Parker approached, the officer in charge said:

"Wreck of a schooner on our weather bow, sir. Harding thinks she looks like a derelict."

The captain examined the distant object through a pair of powerful glasses he had brought with him from the cabin.

"I think it's a derelict. As my orders are to destroy all dangerous derelicts, we will change our course and sail toward it." He then cried to the man at the wheel: "Hard-a-port."

"Hard-a-port it is, sir," replied the man.

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The course thus altered, the ship rapidly approached the floating vessel.

The above incident occurred in the South Atlantic, in latitude 22° S., longitude 24° W., on a certain day in the middle of June toward the close of the nineteenth century, on the Ketrel of London, a full-rigged ship. The Ketrel had sailed from Liverpool, and was bound for Yokohama, Japan. She had taken the southern course around Africa instead of through the Indian Ocean by the straits of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Suez Canal, as she was scheduled to stop at Cape Town. Even if not intending to stop at the southern part of Africa, she might probably have taken the southern route since, in sailing from Europe to India or Australia, a vessel can either pass from the North Atlantic through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, or may take the southern route around the Cape of Good Hope. Though the latter is the longer route, it possesses the advantages of meeting, in the Southern Hemisphere, both winds and ocean currents that will carry it toward the east. For the same reason, on the return to Europe from the East Indies or Australia, sailing vessels sometimes prefer to go by the western route, around Cape Horn, thus circumnavigating the globe.

The Ketrel was an East India merchantman, and carried a varied cargo of goods intended for distribution mainly in Japan. Her commander, Capt. William M. Parker, was a man of long experience on the water, on which he had passed most of his life. Since

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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he had followed the sea continuously from his eighteenth year, and was now past fifty-five, he had had some thirty-seven years of actual work at sea.

The first mate, Lieut. Arthur Harding, was a much younger man, having only reached his thirty-fifth year. Moreover, he had not taken to the sea until his twenty-fifth year, the earlier years having been spent at college, and at the Oxford University. During his student life, Harding had made a specialty of geographical physics and meteorology. A study of the physics of the ocean had caused him to spend several years at sea, and this, together with a careful study of navigation, had finally induced him to follow the sea as a profession.

Although there was a difference of some twenty years in the ages of the captain and his first mate, yet the two men were close friends. The older man would sometimes good-naturedly chaff the other when, as was frequently the case, they differed on some nautical question, the older man saying that he had been at sea before the other was born and, therefore, ought to know more than he. The younger man, however, would retort good-naturedly:

“Undoubtedly, captain, you ought to know more, but in point of fact are you sure you do know more?”

This, however, was only when both men were off duty. While on duty the captain insisted on receiving, and the first mate unhesitatingly accorded his superior officer, the obedience and respect his position called for.

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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The two boys, Harold Arthur Harding and John Parker Jackson, were English lads. Harold was much the younger of the two, being only about thirteen and a half years old, while John, or as his chum called him, Jack, was fully sixteen. Harold was the nephew of Lieutenant Harding, and was on his way to Yokohama, Japan, to join his father and mother, who were then living in the suburbs of that city, where his father, Mr. George Harding, was connected with the English embassy. Jack, who was an orphan, having recently lost both father and mother, was on his way to join Mr. and Mrs. Harding in Yokohama. Jack and Harold had become warmly attached to each other while attending the great preparatory school at Eton, and on the death of his father and mother, Jack had been offered a home in the Harding family.

Since Captain Parker, who temporarily was Jack's guardian, spent the greater part of his life on the sea, and was unable to give the necessary care and attention to the boy, he gladly accepted the kind offer of Mr. and Mrs. Harding. The boys had, therefore, left Liverpool with Captain Parker in the *Ketrel*, as already stated. As for Jack, he was only too glad to continue his association with Harold, arrangements having been made for the boys to pursue their studies in Japan. Another reason why Captain Parker had not hesitated to accept the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Harding, was that the Hardings were distantly connected with the Jacksons by marriage.

Brought up as they had been in a great English

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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preparatory school, both lads had thoroughly developed in them the manly courage and persistency each had inherited from his parents. They had been taught to box, swim, run, wrestle, fence, and shoot. In cricket they would hold their own with almost any boys of their age. Harding, who was an expert with the rifle, pistol, and broadsword had, during his brief visits to his brother's house, given Harold instructions in the use of these weapons until, considering his age, he became quite an expert.

The Ketrel was rapidly approaching the derelict schooner, so that the distance between the two vessels was now so short that even without the use of glasses they could see every now and then the waves washing its decks near the bow. The splintered stumps of the masts projected only a few feet above the tops of the decks. The schooner had listed, probably by reason of the shifting of her cargo, so that the stern projected a few feet above the surface of the water. The bow on the contrary was covered by about a foot and a half of water. Caught in the ocean current the vessel was being rapidly carried through the water, its velocity being slightly increased by the wind blowing against the projecting stern. Now that they were near the vessel they could see that it had either been set on fire by the storm that destroyed it, or that an attempt had been made by some passing vessel to sink it by starting a fire.

"A dangerous derelict," remarked Captain Parker. "We must blow her up before she rips the bottom of some unfortunate vessel she may strike either in a

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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heavy fog or in the darkness of night." Then turning to the lieutenant, he said: "Harding, take a crew in the long boat; board the derelict; place a few torpedoes in her hold, and blow her out of the water."

As soon as he had received this command, Harding said to one of the crew:

"Send the boatswain to me."

"Aye, aye, sir," was the reply.

When the boatswain, named Hiram Higgenbotham, approached, he said:

"Pick out a crew of six men; man the long boat; take the gunner with you. Tell him to place two torpedoes on the boat, and then report to me. We will board the derelict and blow her out of the water."

As soon as the two boys heard these orders, Harold exclaimed:

"O Uncle Arthur, may Jack and I go with you? It would be such great sport to board the schooner."

"If the captain is willing," replied Harding, "I have no objections to your going."

"I see no reason why the boys should not go. If they keep still and obey orders they will not be in the way."

"Thank you, captain," exclaimed both boys. "We will do exactly as we are told."

It was fortunate for the boys that both Captain Parker and Lieutenant Harding thoroughly believed in treating the boys, not as little children, but in such a manner as best to develop their manliness. Neither believed in coddling boys, or forbidding them from

doing reasonable things lest an accident might occur. Under this treatment the proper kind of a boy soon learns that most valuable lesson of how to take care of himself. For this reason both boys while on the Ketrel were permitted to do things that to perhaps the majority of people would have appeared to be highly dangerous.

The long boat manned by a crew of six men, not counting the gunner, Lieutenant Harding, and the two boys, was soon spinning through the water under the strong and well-timed pull of the oars.

As they approached the stern of the schooner the name of the wrecked vessel could be partially seen in raised letters that once had been firmly attached to the woodwork. Some of these letters, however, had been torn off by the force of the waves, although enough of them remained to show that the name of the vessel was The Sallie B. — of B—n.

“ Apparently an American vessel. What do you think, Higgenbotham? ” remarked Harding.

“ ‘Pears like a Yankee-built vessel, sir,” was the reply.

A period could be distinctly seen after the first letter “ B,” and since the space between the second letter “ B ” and the final “ n ” was five letters, the name of the vessel was evidently The Sallie B. something of some city or town beginning with a “ B,” and ending with an “ n.”

“ That ‘ere name might be Boston, sir,” said Higgenbotham to the lieutenant.

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Harold, who had been looking at the lettering on the stern through a pair of field-glasses, handed them to his uncle and said:

“Look, Uncle Arthur, you can see the first letter of the last word was a ‘B’; for where it was attached to the stern the wood is of a different color from the rest of the wood.”

“That’s true, Harold,” was the reply, “and, as there’s about room for four additional letters between the ‘B’ and the ‘n’ the schooner has most probably come originally from Boston.”

Making their boat fast to the side of the schooner, and leaving two of the crew in it, the rest boarded her. The portion of the charred deck near the stern was high and dry above the water, but the bow was covered with shallow water, and every now and then the waves broke over nearly half of the deck.

There were many evidences that the vessel had beenadrift for a long time; for the planks were covered with seaweed and the sides with barnacles.

“There is a sargasso sea to the east of us,” remarked Harding. “She has probably been caught in it and has perhaps remained there for several years, until at last, under a strong wind, she has drifted into an ocean current and again started on her dangerous voyage.”

“Why has not the schooner sunk long ago, sir?” inquired Jack of the lieutenant.

“I cannot say for certain, Jack,” was the reply, “but most probably because she is loaded with lumber.

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If this is so, she may remain drifting about on the ocean for several additional years. However," he added, turning to the gunner, "she is a dangerous derelict. We must try to blow her out of the water. I guess we can do this, can we not?" he inquired of the gunner.

The gunner, pleased with the idea of blowing something up, replied :

" There won't be much trouble about that, sir. But let me first see what remains out of water below deck."

Although nearly all the interior was filled with water, yet they finally succeeded in placing two torpedoes in parts of the hold far enough below the top of the vessel to blow her out of the water when exploded.

It required rather more than an hour to put the two torpedoes in place. As soon as this was done a fuse, long enough to burn for several minutes, was suitably attached to them, and led over the stern of the vessel. They then boarded the long boat, and setting fire to the fuse rowed rapidly away.

When at a distance of about five hundred feet from the derelict a dull explosion was heard, a sheet of flame was seen issuing from the doomed vessel, and a column of water was thrown high into the air. The force of the explosion blew the vessel into fragments, so that the ocean was soon covered for some distance around with pieces of wreckage. These, however, being for the greater part water-logged, soon sunk again. That the principal cargo of the schooner was lumber could

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be seen from the logs and sawn boards that remained for some time floating on the surface of the ocean.

“That’s the end of a dangerous derelict,” remarked the lieutenant as they rowed toward the ship.

That night Captain Parker entered the following in his log-book:

“June 15, 18—, latitude 22° S., longitude 30° W., a derelict schooner sighted on the weather bow about noon. Sent a crew with Lieutenant Harding, who blew her up with two torpedoes. Schooner was marked on her bow, ‘The Sallie B. —— of B——n.’ Difference in the color of the wood showed that the first missing letter of the last word was ‘B,’ the vessel was, therefore, probably of Boston.”

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## CHAPTER II

### CONCERNING DERELICTS

THE derelict schooner had been sighted about noon, and several hours passed before the long boat returned to the ship. All on the boat, especially the boys, were therefore ready for the noonday meal. After the meal, this not being the lieutenant's watch, that gentleman, accompanied by the two boys, sought the shade of an awning on the deck. Naturally the conversation turned on the events of the past few hours.

"Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "I won't ask you now what a derelict is, since we have seen one, and I know pretty much all about it as far as the name is concerned."

"So you know all about it, do you?" said Jack in a chaffing tone. "Suppose you begin by telling us just what a derelict is."

"I can do that," replied Harold. "A derelict is a wreck without anybody on it, that floats about on the waters wherever the winds and waves may happen to take it. How is that for a definition, Uncle Arthur?" appealing to the lieutenant as the court of last resort.

"A fairly good definition, Harold," was the reply. "The word derelict is generally applied to any ship or other vessel that has been voluntarily abandoned at sea, with no intention of returning to it or claiming it

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again. The name derelict is also sometimes applied to any property that is voluntarily given up or abandoned by its owner. It is, however, most frequently applied to a vessel at sea."

"Then," replied Harold, "I don't see how the head master at Eton was right in saying that I was derelict."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jack laughing, "you were certainly in such a condition as regards your school work that you could properly be said to be lost or adrift, and never expected to find or return to yourself again."

"Jack is putting it into you rather hard, Harold," said the lieutenant smiling. "I think, however, he has made a very excellent statement. He pictures you, Harold, as a ship sailing over the ocean. You are the master or commander, and are supposed to be sailing your vessel in search of knowledge or information. You had, so to speak, voluntarily abandoned or ceased to direct your vessel and had thus for the time become a derelict. In this way the head master very properly spoke of you as being a derelict, or of being derelict to your duty."

"Thank you, uncle," replied Harold, "I understand the word now very well."

"Lieutenant," said Jack, "won't you tell us something about derelicts? Are there very many on the ocean?"

"Yes, Jack, there are many thousands on the different oceans. Of course, every now and then they sink in the deep water and thus disappear. And then again

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they are frequently blown up, just as we have done with the schooner to-day. But since, during every severe storm many other derelicts are started off on their wanderings, their number is constantly being added to."

"In what parts of the ocean is one most likely to meet them, Uncle Arthur?" inquired Harold.

"Derelicts are common in the Pacific, Atlantic, and the Indian Oceans. They are also seen frequently in the Arctic and the Antarctic Oceans. They are commonest however in the North Atlantic, especially off the eastern coasts of the United States. In a publication by the United States Hydrographic Office on the 'Wrecks and Derelicts of the North Atlantic Ocean,' it appears that from 1887 to 1893 a total number of one thousand one hundred and forty-six unidentified derelicts have been observed. When we add to these four hundred and eighty-two identified derelicts there is a total of one thousand six hundred and twenty-eight observed in seven years."

"Gracious," exclaimed Harold in an astonished tone, "what an awful number of wrecks must have occurred on the ocean!"

"Yes," replied his uncle; "for the derelicts only include the vessels that don't sink. Most wrecked vessels sink almost immediately, and only a few remain floating."

"Lieutenant," inquired Jack, "which generally cause the greatest damage to vessels, icebergs or derelicts?"

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“What would you say to that, Harold?” inquired the lieutenant, who was a natural born teacher, and who being with the boys a large part of his spare time was endeavoring to give them as much information about the sea and its many strange phenomena as he could. “Do you think icebergs would be more dangerous to vessels than derelicts.”

“Why, of course, uncle,” replied Harold, “icebergs would be much more dangerous. Think how much bigger an iceberg is—bigger generally than even the largest ships. Mr. Higgenbotham, the boatswain, told me the other day that he had seen icebergs several hundred feet high and several thousands of feet in length. Think what a blow such a big piece of ice could give to a vessel if it should happen to strike against it.”

“What do you think, Jack?” returned the lieutenant, turning to the boy.

“Well,” said Jack, “I guess Harold is right; is he not, sir?”

“No,” was the reply, “you are both wrong. An iceberg, as a rule, is far less dangerous to vessels than derelicts. Icebergs, however, have been known to sink many vessels.”

“Won’t you please tell us why derelicts are so dangerous?” inquired Jack.

“Yes, uncle,” said Harold laughing, “you surely ought to tell us now after letting us guess wrong.”

“Well, there are various reasons why derelicts are more to be dreaded at sea than icebergs. In the first

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place an iceberg projects so far above the surface of the ocean that it can be easily seen by the lookout unless the air is very foggy or the night very dark. Even when it cannot be distinctly seen, an iceberg can often make itself felt by reason of the cool air that accompanies it. During foggy weather, at day-time, when the berg cannot be seen directly, its presence may often easily be recognized by the glow of light thrown off from its surface.

“ In the next place, when a vessel is struck by an iceberg, since the ice projects so high above the surface of the water, the blow is generally received above the level of its first bulkhead. The damage is, therefore, generally of such a character as not immediately to sink the vessel.

“ Now a derelict is a very different thing. In the first place, it lies low in the water, so low indeed that it is difficult for the lookout, even if keen-sighted and alert, to detect it. Indeed, in many cases, it is practically impossible to detect its presence even during good weather, since it is so low in the water. Often, the only indication of its presence is a sudden blow given to the vessel. This blow, coming as it does against the ship’s bottom, is apt to rip her open so that often in a few moments the unfortunate vessel sinks to the bottom with all on board.”

“ Uncle Arthur,” inquired Harold, “ are not derelicts the cause of the disappearance of so many vessels that sail out from port and are never again heard of? ”

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"Yes, Harold, they undoubtedly are. For this reason, nearly all the principal governments of the world give instructions to their vessels when meeting derelicts, that cannot be towed into port, to blow them up, as we have done, or to sink them in some other way."

"How do they generally destroy derelicts, uncle?" inquired Harold.

"Various methods are employed, Harold. Sometimes, with heavy vessels like cruisers, ramming is employed; that is, the cruiser throws itself against the sides of the derelict for the purpose of sinking it by cutting a hole in the side. This method, however, is not always found to be safe. I remember reading of a derelict that the United States cruiser, Atlanta, endeavored to destroy in this way. Getting up her full speed she hurled herself against the side of the derelict. This derelict, as in the case of the one we sunk to-day, was loaded with timber, and was therefore difficult to sink. The first blow cut off her stern. At the second blow, another small section was sheared off. The third blow caught the derelict amidships, but the rammed vessel stuck on the ram and rode with it for a short distance. The fourth blow nearly cut the derelict in two, and the fifth blow sank her. The work, however, had been very severe, and the cruiser's prow was so strained that on reaching port it was necessary to dock her for repairs."

"Lieutenant," inquired Jack, "would it not be easier to destroy a derelict by striking her with projectiles from large guns?"

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"Yes, Jack," was the reply, "and, as a rule, our cruisers are only too glad to meet a derelict, since it affords them excellent gun practice. You see it is not an easy thing to find a satisfactory target for large guns at sea, so that a derelict is hailed by them as a piece of good fortune."

"I imagine a derelict cannot stand many balls from a large gun," said Harold.

"On the contrary, Harold," replied his uncle, "a water-logged derelict is by no means easy to sink. The projectiles instead of splitting the wood and thus breaking up the vessel, simply pass through its more or less rotten timbers and, since nearly all the vessel is already filled with water, a few additional holes in her side make but little difference."

"Then," said Harold, "a torpedo is best for sinking derelicts; am I right, uncle?"

"Yes," was the reply; "a torpedo is by far the most satisfactory method."

"Uncle, I remember you said you could tell us many interesting stories about derelicts."

"That is true, my boy. Derelicts are so common in the ocean that you will find almost every sailor who has passed many years on the water has had some experience with them."

"Won't you tell us some of these stories?" inquired Harold anxiously.

"Yes, please do," added Jack.

"Well, I will tell you a few stories, and then you can go to some of the sailors in the forecastle

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who will doubtless be glad to spin you yarns about derelicts."

"All right, uncle, we'll begin with your stories," said Harold.

"Well, to begin with, the distance traveled by derelicts is often very great. The Fanny E. Woolston, an American schooner, was first observed as a derelict on October 15, 1891, in the Atlantic Ocean, off Cape Hatteras. She then drifted for over three years, during which time she probably traveled more than ten thousand miles. This derelict started with the Gulf Stream toward Europe, but being afterward blown into the Sargasso Sea by a gale remained there for a long time, and afterward escaped and again started on its travels. She was seen on nearly fifty different occasions, and when last observed was apparently in as good condition as when abandoned.

"Another schooner, the Alma Cummings, drifted for five hundred and eighty-seven days over the Atlantic for a distance that has been estimated at about five thousand miles. She left Port Royal for Boston in January, 1895, loaded with lumber, and was wrecked by a blizzard in February. Her masts were snapped off close to the decks, when the spars, held by the rigging, punched holes in the side of the vessel, and the seams opening, the water poured into the hold in jets. Her lumber, however, kept her afloat, although she was continually swept by seas.

"The crew suffered great hardships. Ice two feet thick formed on the deck; the pumps froze; all pro-

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visions on the vessel were soaked with water, and not a single match was left to start a fire. At last, however, by firing a rifle into a can filled with kerosene oil a flame was obtained. This fire was carefully husbanded for cooking purposes after extinguishing what might have led to a general conflagration. After prolonged sufferings the crew was rescued by the British steamer *Queensmore*, one hundred miles off the coast of New Jersey, and the vessel was abandoned.

“The *Alma Cummings* was reported by a number of ships as a derelict drifting in various parts of the Atlantic Ocean. Several months afterward she was reported near the equator, burned to the water’s edge.”

“Then, lieutenant,” remarked Jack, “in some cases derelicts have been found in good condition and the cargo uninjured?”

“Yes, Jack,” was the reply. “But I will only have time to tell you the remarkable story of the *Celeste*. She sailed in 1887 for New York with thirteen people aboard, including the captain’s wife and child. Two weeks later she was sighted by a British bark pursuing such an erratic course that the people on the bark knowing that something was wrong, sent out a boat and boarded her. No sign of life was seen on board, although a careful search was made on all parts of the vessel, but everywhere a silence and quiet like that of a great pest-house prevailed.

“What was especially strange about this vessel was that the crew from the British bark could see nothing wrong. All the boats except the largest, were hang-

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ing on the davits. The hull was not at all damaged. The rigging and the spars were uninjured, the sails were all set and the cargo remained untouched. Even the men's washing was seen hanging up above the forecastle. An awning was spread over the poop. The binnacle-wheel and rudder were intact.

"A sewing-machine was found in the cabin with a child's dress under the needle. A half-eaten dinner remained on the table. The ship's chronometer was still ticking in the chartroom, while the cash-box had not been touched. The log, posted up to within forty-eight hours of the time of the visit, recorded no threatened disaster.

"Although the most careful inquiry and search were made yet no trace could be found of those thirteen people who had thus suddenly disappeared, nor were they ever afterward heard of."

"That's an all-right story, uncle," replied Harold. "What do you suppose was the cause of the disappearance?"

"I don't know," was the reply, "I will talk about it some other time, but now I must get ready to go on my watch. Go and talk to the sailors in the forecastle about it; they will probably spin you many yarns about this and other curious things that have happened to derelicts."

## CHAPTER III

### HIRAM HIGGENBOTHAM, BOATSWAIN

HIRAM HIGGENBOTHAM, boatswain of the *Ketrel*, was a native of Massachusetts. Like most Yankees he possessed no little inventive power, and having in his early life learned the trade of carpenter and joiner, was able to put such of his inventions, that could be modeled in wood, into practical shape. Hiram had in later life followed the sea for twenty-five years, and being bright and quick to learn had mastered his new calling and was in every respect an able seaman. Unlike most seamen he cared very little for his grog, but was an inveterate smoker. Indeed, when not on duty he was most always seen with his lighted pipe in his mouth; for, like many other men, Hiram was a slave to the smoking habit.

Hiram was a good-natured man and was much liked both by officers and crew. He was perhaps one of the best men among the sailors to spin a yarn, and appeared to be well posted, not only about things that happened on the sea, but was well acquainted with the habits of most of the animals to be seen at sea either in the air or in the water. But Hiram was frightfully ungrammatical, his English being something awful. Like most sailors he was exceedingly superstitious and, firmly believing in ghosts, apparitions, dreams, and

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omens, was constantly on the lookout for signs of good or bad luck to himself, to his companions, or to the ship.

The boys, to whom a free run of all parts of the vessel had been given by both the captain and the lieutenant, had already made friends with many of the sailors, especially with the boatswain. On his part, Hiram had been greatly attracted by the boys, who visited the forecastle several times nearly every day. They greatly liked to hear him spin some of his wonderful yarns. Even when Hiram was away there was almost always some one of the crew who was only too glad to entertain the boys with stories of the sea, or to answer their many questions.

When the lieutenant had finished talking about derelicts and had left the boys to get ready to go on his watch, Jack said to Harold:

“Let’s go to the forecastle and get Mr. Higgenbotham to tell us some stories about derelicts.”

“Agreed,” said Harold.

The boys were soon in the forecastle where they found the boatswain partly hidden by a dense cloud of tobacco smoke he was raising by pulling vigorously at a clay pipe. As the boys entered the forecastle some five or six of the crew drew near the boatswain in order to hear the conversation.

“Good arternoon, my lads,” exclaimed Hiram, “what kin I do for you?”

“We came to ask you to tell us anything you can about derelicts,” replied Harold.

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"What do you wish fer to know about them?" inquired the boatswain.

"Why," said Harold, "Uncle Arthur was telling us a very strange story about a derelict called the Celeste. Have you ever heard about her?"

"Have I ever heerd about the Celeste!" exclaimed the boatswain. "I calculate I have often heerd tell how thirteen people on her suddenly disappeared, and were never arterwards found. I reckon there are none of my messmates here but wot heerd the wonderful yarn of the Celeste."

"You're right there, Hiram," exclaimed one of the men. "We've all heerd of her, haven't we?" inquired he of the other men.

"We sartinly have," murmured the men.

"But what do you want to ask about the Celeste, my lads?" inquired the boatswain.

Harold answered this question.

"I can't understand, Mr. Higgenbotham," he said, "how so many people could have disappeared suddenly without leaving any traces behind them."

"Don't let that trouble you, sonny. You are not the only one who hain't been able to get on the track of them unfortunate people. There's a-many older than ye who have tried to crack that 'ere nut, but they've guv it up as ruther too tough for 'em."

"Mr. Higgenbotham," exclaimed Jack, "Lieutenant Harding told us it was evident that there had been no accident to the vessel, and that there were no signs of mutiny or sickness. It seemed as if all had left the

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vessel in one of the boats, for all the other boats were there and only one was missing."

"That's true, my lad," remarked Higgenbotham, "and they appeared to have left it tarnation quick. So quick that the sailors hadn't no time to take their kits out of the fokesel, nor the wash that was hanging on the line above the fokesel. It war jest the same thing in the cabin. The folks there didn't stop to finish eating their dinner, but left a sight of wittles on the table. The cap'in's wife even left a dress she war making for her little one under the needle of her sewing-machine."

"Yes," added one of the crew greatly interested in the story, "a chronometer was found ticking in the chartroom. The cash-box was untouched. Wot ever made those people leave it made 'em leave blame quick; for they went over the side into one boat even leaving the sails set."

"And are you sure," inquired Harold, "there had been no sickness or trouble on board? Had nothing gone wrong with the vessel or the crew?"

"Sartin," replied Higgenbotham. "It was so written down in a book wot don't lie. The cap'en writ it down in his log-book only forty-eight hours afore the vessel was boarded by a crew from the British bark that nothing had gone wrong as fur as up to that 'ere time."

"I suppose then there couldn't have been any mistake in the log-book," said Jack.

"No, my lad," replied the boatswain, "wot's writ

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down in a log-book is treu. The log-book don't tell no lies. Does it, mates?" appealing to the crew.

"Sartinly not," replied the men, "you can bet on thet."

"Then what made them leave? Can you make it out, Mr. Higgenbotham?" inquired the boys.

"I calculate I hev my opeenions about it. But I'm free to acknowledge my mates don't agree with me."

"Now, Hiram," said one of the men, "don't fill the lads' heads with any of your superstitious nonsense."

"All right, matie," replied the boatswain, "suppose you tell the lads just how it happened."

"Well, my lads," was the reply, "I'll tell ye, free, I don't know how it happened. No more does any one here. But it did happen and it happened all of a sud-dint. The entire crew appears to have gone over the side and were never again heard from."

"So that's the best explanation ye kin give the lads," said the boatswain with a sneer.

"Yes, that's the best I kin give."

"Hiram," said some of the crew laughing, "let's have the way ye explain it."

"Ye ain't goin' to hear it from me," said the boatswain. "I ain't goin' to take the chance to be laughed at by such a bloomin' lot of lubbers as ye are."

"Please let us hear your explanation, Mr. Higgenbotham," pleaded Harold.

"Yes, please tell us the way you look at it," added Jack.

"Wall then," said the boatswain more graciously,

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"since the lads ask me how I square the thing up I'll tell ye treu. Them people on the Celeste were suddenly took off the vessel by specters or ghosts."

At this most of the men laughed and began chaffing Hiram, calling out:

"Is it a pipe dream ye are givin' the lads, Hiram?"

Some few, however, appeared to be greatly interested with Hiram's statement, and nodded their heads to indicate that they agreed with him.

"Why, Mr. Higgenbotham," exclaimed the two boys, "you surely don't believe in ghosts or specters. We thought that such ideas were no longer held by intelligent people."

"But I can't help believin' in 'em, my lads," was the reply. "I heven't only met a-plenty of men who have seed ghosts, but I hev seed them myself."

"Tell us some of these stories, Mr. Higgenbotham?" asked the boys eagerly.

"Well, my lads, listen. Once when I wuz on a vessel before the mast, a man whose hammock wuz swung alongside of mine woke up suddenly and began yelling fierce. Jumping out of my hammock, I sed, 'What's up, messmate?' and he sed, 'The ghost of my dead brother has been lying down in my bunk. I seed him sure. See, the bunk is wet with sea-water.' And sartin it was," added Hiram solemnly.

"What made the man think it was a ghost?" inquired one of the men. "Perhaps it was some fellow playing a trick on him."

"I'm not a-answering that," replied Hiram. "But

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this I will tell ye. When that man got to port he heard that his brother had been drowned at sea at jest the same time as he was seen in his brother's bunk."

Hiram's story appeared to impress greatly some of the sailors, one of whom remarked:

"I'll spin ye a yarn to match that, Hiram. I signed fer a ship that was heading just as we are for the Cape of Good Hope. One of the crew declared that a ghost came on the ship in the night and said, 'Turn out and heave the lead.' We did so, but not touching bottom we turned in again. The ghost again appeared and said, 'Turn out, and heave the lead.' We did so agin and found only seven fathoms. Telling the captain what had happened, the ship was tacked about, and when the sun rose they found they had made a mistake in their observations and were not several hundred miles from the cape as they supposed, but a'most directly on it."

"Hiram," said one of the crew, "ye said ye had seed a ghost yourself. Spin us that ere yarn."

"I'll spin it for ye," exclaimed the boatswain, "and it's a treu yarn too. Nigh fifteen years ago, when I was sarving on a vessel outward bound from Charleston, S. C., to New York, one of the crew wuz named Sam Johnson, the wickedest man I've ever seed and that's not saying a little. Somehow or other Sam seemed to care a mighty sight for me. He told me one day when he had been taking too much grog, for I didn't care for mine and guv it to him, that he had murdered several men. About two days arter we had

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left port a great storm rose and we wuz in danger of sinking. Sam was greatly afeered, and called out every now and then that he seed the ghosts of the people he had killed beckoning to him to come into the water. At last he came to me and said: 'Hiram, ef I don't leave this blooming ship this here storm will sink her; fer the ghosts of 'em murdered men air going to hev me in the water even if they have to spill the whole crew overboard, so I reckon I have to leave ye.' With that he jumped overboard from the rigging and I could hear him shriek just as he was sinking in the water, 'They've got me, Hiram; they say the storm will pass now.'"

"And did the storm pass?" inquired the boys.

"Sartin," was the reply, "but I ain't through my story. The storm stopped as Sam had sed it would, and we reached our port safely. On our voyage back to Charleston, as we wuz passing the place whar Sam jumped overboard another storm struck us. Now maties, this is what I seed when standing on the deck at midnight. I suddenly looked up and seed as plain ez I see ye here around me, the speerit of Sam Johnson. I knowed it was Sam fur he looked just as he did the night he cum to me and told me he wuz goin' over the side."

"Did he look jest like a livin' man, Hiram?" inquired one of the crew, who evidently was a believer in ghosts.

"No, matie," replied Hiram, "thet's just it. He hed a kind of a thin, misty look about him, just as if he

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warn't made uv flesh and blood like livin' people, but uv a kind of a smoke. Though he was standing in front uv the mainmast, yet I could look right through his body to the wood of the mast."

"Was ye skeered, Hiram?" inquired one of the men.

"I reckon I was sartinly considerable skeered," was the reply; "but I said bold-like, so as to fool Sam and make him think I didn't keer: 'Who are ye, anyhow? What are ye a-coming on this ship fur?'"

"'I am the speerit of Sam Johnson,' was the answer, 'who jumped overboard from this vessel in this here place when ye were out'ard bound.'

"'What do ye mean, Sam Johnson,' I said kinder fierce-like, 'a-comin' on this here vessel and bringing this tarnation storm along with ye. Speerits like ye have no call to come aboard an honest vessel. What do ye want, enyhow?'

"'I can't rest, Hiram,' Sam's speerit answered me, 'till I git all that belongs to me on this here vessel.'

"Then," said Hiram, "I kinder drove sharp, and made a bargain with Sam.

"'Will ye promise me straight to go and take this here storm with ye if I dump overboard all I can find of yourn on the vessel?'

"'I promise straight,' was the reply."

"And did you do it?" asked the boys laughing.

"Yes," replied Hiram, "I knew the part of the fokesel whar they had kept Sam's chest, so I got it and hove it overboard."

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“And did the storm stop then?” inquired one of the crew.

“Yes, Sam’s speerit dove into the water arter the chest and took the storm along with him, so that in a little while it was good weather agin.”

“And was that the last you saw of Sam?” inquired Harold laughing.

“No, my lad, afore we reached the harbor another storm arose and I agin seed Sam’s speerit standin’ alongside me near midnight, so I said:

“‘What’s up, Sam? Ain’t ye comfortable and happy yet?’

“‘I’m as happy as a man like me kin hope to be,’ he said, ‘but I’m still missing one of my boots. Look it up for me, Hiram, or I’ll hang around this here wessel with a big storm and git it ef I have to drown every mother’s son of ye.’

“‘Now don’t git excited, Sam,’ I replied, ‘none of us here want that ’ere boot. Besides, it’s an odd one, and it would be of no use to any one except a man with a wooden leg, and we hain’t got no sich feller aboard. I’ll go find it.’

“‘And I’ll wait here ontil ye fetch it,’ replied Sam’s ghost.

“I went to the fokesel and looked fer a quarter-hour but couldn’t find it, so I returned and said:

“‘Ye’ve made a mistake, Sam, it ain’t thar.’

“‘Yes it is,’ said Sam, ‘I see it in the corner on the right hand as ye enter the door, back of a lot of boxes.’

“‘All right,’ I said, ‘I’ll go fetch it.’ ”

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"And did you find it?" inquired Jack laughing.

"It was thar fur sartin, just as Sam hed told me, so I took it back to Sam's speerit and said:

"Now look here, Sam, I'm gitting tired of this here game. It's mean of you to come here with your storms. If I heave this here boot overboard will ye leave and take the storm with ye and never come back agin?"

"I promise," said Sam's ghost.

"So I hove the old boot overboard. Sam dived arter it, and I never seed him agin."

Hiram appeared to enjoy this story so much and chuckled so heartily while he was relating it that the boys greatly suspected that he was chaffing them. So too did some of the crew, who remarked:

"You are sartinly great, Hiram, at spinning yarns."

"Then do I understand," said Harold to the boatswain, "that you think it was a speerit or a ghost that caused the people of the Celeste to leave the vessel?"

"I don't say I limit it to one speerit. It may hev been a lot of speerits for all I know, but I hold that it was speerits or ghosts wot made them folks leave the vessel so suddent."

"Then you really believe in ghosts, Mr. Higgenbotham?" said Jack.

"How kin I help it, my lad; I've seed them and seein' is believin', is it not?"

"It may be, Hiram," said one of the crew, "provided ye were not in a condition in which ye seed things double or other than they wuz."

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One of the men who was better educated than the rest of the crew remarked:

“ My lads, it is just possible that the luckless crew of the Celeste was carried away from the vessel by a strange animal of the deep, that suddenly rose from the waters and seized them in some of its many long arms or tentacles. You know there have been seen in the ocean a variety of huge animal something like a cuttlefish. This animal is furnished with a number of long arms with which it can take hold of people and drag them off a vessel. Now, it is just possible that this is the explanation of the cause of the disappearance of the crew of the Celeste.”

“ I have read of such an animal,” remarked Jack. “ It is sometimes called the kraken, is it not, sir? ”

“ Yes, my lad,” was the reply. “ I understand it is sometimes called by that name.”

“ But how about the boat? ” inquired one of the crew.

“ I don’t know,” was the reply. “ It is possible that when several of the crew had been dragged off the vessel that the rest took the long boat in an endeavor to rescue them, when they were also destroyed.”

“ Hiram,” inquired the man who had been telling the story about the kraken, “ what do you think of this explanation? ”

“ Wall,” was the reply, “ it ain’t so bad. I have heerd wonderful stories told uv sech critters. A-many years ago, in 1834, Captain Neill, of the full-rigged ship Robertson, seed such a critter, and drawed a

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sketch uv her. He sed it war so big that it looked like a vessel on her beam-ends. When they drew near it they could see its head wot reached twelve feet above the water."

"But have such animals ever been known to drag men from vessels?" asked Harold.

"Sartin," replied the boatswain. "I read once in a book that one of these critters suddenly rose straight out of the waters of the ocean and histing its arms above the bulwarks of a ship hauled off ten men who were working outside the vessel. It then laid hold on the shrouds where it captured two other men. It wuz at last harpooned and swam away, but it left one of its legs which wuz twenty-five feet long."

"Well," remarked the boys, "what happened on the Celeste was certainly very wonderful. I suppose, however, that that is the most wonderful story that was ever heard about an abandoned vessel?"

"Don't be too sartin," replied one of the crew. "Hiram, spin the lads the yarn of the Ellen Austin."

"Wait a moment," replied the boatswain, "ontil I fill my pipe."

And when he had done this he began:

"This is the treu yarn of a derelict that war seed in 1881 in the Middle Atlantic by the crew of the Ellen Austin. Wot made the Austin think that there wuz trouble on board or that there wuz something wrong, wuz the unsartin way the vessel was steered; for, instead of holding to a treu course, she went so unsartin and changed her direction so rediculus that they

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knowed something wuz up. It might not have appeared so to a landsman, but to sailors it wuz quite different. So they sent a crew aboard, and although everything wuz found to be right, yet not a trace of the crew wuz there. As the vessel wuz worth salvage, the captain put a prize crew on board to sail her to New York, and the two vessels parted company. Two days arterward, to their surprise, the Ellen Austin again sighted the derelict and signaled it so as to see if everything was right. No answer wuz received, so another crew was sent on the derelict. This crew wuz surprised and skeered to find that the hull prize crew had disappeared. You may bet them fellers tried hard to find their mess-mates, but no traces of them could be discovered. Arter much trouble the captain of the Ellen Austin persuaded a second prize crew to board the vessel. What happened to her no one ever discovered, for that vessel never reached port."

"Tell the lads about the brig, the Resolven," suggested one of the crew.

"All right," said the boatswain, "I will be glad; fer this here is a queerer yarn than any I have spun ye. This here brig, Resolven, left Newfoundland for Labrador in August, 1884. Three days arterwards the British warship Mallard picked her up, but there war no crew on board. Her sails war set, her sidelights war still burning, and the galley fire war still hot. Everything about the vessel wuz in spick and span order, but the crew had disappeared, nor hez that crew ever bin heerd of since."

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Seeing the surprise of the boys, the man who had told them the stories of the kraken, remarked:

“There are strange things that happen on the ocean, boys.”

That evening Harold told his uncle some of the yarns he had heard in the forecastle. He was especially desirous of finding out whether his uncle believed in ghosts.

“Mr. Higgenbotham seems to be a believer in ghosts, uncle. Of course, there are no such things, are there?”

“No, Arthur,” was the reply. “No sensible people believe now in ghosts or apparitions. At the same time there are some strange appearances that have never been satisfactorily explained. I don’t believe, however, that we have any right to look on them as supernatural. Of course, you must not forget that as a class sailors are apt to be quite superstitious, and you will find among them many who firmly believe in ghosts, apparitions, omens, signs, and other similar things.”

“Uncle Arthur,” remarked Harold, “if you have time won’t you please tell us two of the most curious cases of derelicts you have ever heard of?”

“Let me think awhile, Harold,” said his uncle laughing. “It is not an easy thing to remember two of the most curious things in this line, where there are so many, many curious things happening. I think, however, I remember two stories that will greatly interest both of you.”

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"That's splendid, uncle," said Harold, "let's have them."

He then told them the story of a derelict that was seen sailing from the frozen Arctic toward the south. While there were no living men on the vessel, yet there was a number of skeletons. One of them was especially horrible to observe, for it was lashed by means of a rope to the steering-wheel. Its skeleton hands rested on the wheel, while its sightless eyes were seen gazing straight ahead.

He also told them another story of a derelict that was seen mounted on the top of an iceberg that also came floating southward from the Arctic Ocean. Just how the vessel ever got on top of the berg has never been satisfactorily explained. It is possible, however, he told them, that in some manner the vessel was grounded at the base of the iceberg to which it was firmly fastened by the rapidly forming ice, and afterward when the berg capsized, as bergs frequently do, the vessel was carried to the top. I think it was claimed that this vessel was seen lying on her keel mounted on the top of the berg. But it is not known how this could have occurred, on the assumption that the iceberg had merely turned over.

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## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

ALTHOUGH the Ketrel was bound for Yokohama, Japan, via Cape Town, yet when she met the derelict she was much nearer the coast of South America than that of Africa. The reason was that the Ketrel being a sailing vessel, Captain Parker had preferred to take this route so as to enable him to take advantage of the ocean currents. In the South Atlantic these streams, which have properly been called "the rivers of the ocean," flow toward the south off the eastern coast of South America, but toward the north off the western coast of Africa. Therefore, though the route off the South American coast was much longer than that off the coast of Africa, yet by taking the former there would be an actual gain in time, since on this route the ocean currents would be in the direction in which they wished the ship to go, while on the other the ocean currents would be against them.

As the Ketrel approached the continent of Africa every one came on deck to get a sight of land. Harold and Jack were standing near Lieutenant Harding as the vessel drew near the African coast. They were now near enough to the continent to see its shore lands. The Ketrel was almost directly headed for a point near the extreme southwestern point of the continent on

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which could be seen a low mountain range. The summit of the mountain nearest them was unlike those of most mountains; for instead of being pointed or peaked it was level or flat.

“Boys,” said the lieutenant, pointing to the flat-top mountain, “what does the shape of that mountain remind you of?”

“Of a big table,” exclaimed Jack.

“What do you say, Harold?” inquired his uncle.

“I agree with Jack; it looks just like a great big table.”

“You are right,” exclaimed the lieutenant, “that mountain is named from its shape, Table Mountain.”

“You don’t often see mountains with flat tops like that,” exclaimed Harold. “I should think it wouldn’t be hard to remember Table Mountain after once seeing it.”

“True,” replied his uncle, “a navigator who has once seen the African continent from off the Cape of Good Hope should have no difficulty in again recognizing Table Mountain.”

“The Cape of Good Hope,” continued the lieutenant, “was discovered in 1486, by Bartholomew Diaz, a Portuguese navigator. Diaz called it ‘The Cape of Tempests.’ John II, king of Portugal, regarding this cape as a goal to the gradual circumnavigation of the African continent, changed its name from the Cape of Tempests to the Cape of Good Hope. It was Vasco da Gama who first doubled this cape on November 20, 1497, in this way reaching the Indian Ocean.”

When they first sighted Table Mountain the sky was clear and free from clouds, and was still in this condition when they first began to talk about Table Mountain. During the next half-hour, however, while they were rapidly approaching Cape Town, clouds began to form at the edge of the flat top of the mountain, on the side from which the wind was blowing. They were now near enough to see the mountain clearly without the aid of glasses, and could see the white cloud masses, carried by the wind, sweep over the top. Fresh cloud material being formed on the windward side, the entire mountain-top was soon covered by a pure white cloud although the lower slopes were still distinctly visible. It looked as if some giants, intending to use the top of Table Mountain on which to spread their lunch, first covered the mountain-top with a snowy white tablecloth.

"How is that for a picnic ground?" inquired Jack, who was still looking at the mountain-top.

"It's an all right place," replied Harold laughing.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Harding, "that's what the sailors think. When a cloud collects on the top of the mountain they generally say they are spreading the tablecloth for dinner."

"Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "that almost looks like magic, doesn't it? Here's a great big cloud that suddenly appears on one side of the mountain and is then rolled over the top. I remember being told while at Eton that clouds were caused by the cooling of the air, but I don't quite understand how it is that this

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cloud began on one side of the mountain-top and then rolled across it until the entire summit was covered. It is such a funny shape for a cloud, isn't it? It don't seem to extend very high above the mountain, nor does it reach far below the top, for we can distinctly see the sides of the mountain. Won't you please explain to us how this is?"

"Yes, please do, Lieutenant Harding," said Jack. "I remember studying about clouds, but I never before heard about a cloud like this."

"Like most of the things that occur in nature," replied the lieutenant, "this is easily explained. There is always present in the air a quantity of water in the shape of invisible vapor. When water is heated it evaporates or passes into an invisible condition known as vapor. When air containing water vapor is sufficiently cooled, the vapor becomes visible in the shape of minute drops of water, thus forming clouds."

"Yes, uncle," said Harold, "I understand that, for we studied that much at Eton; but why is it that the cloud formed on one side of the mountain and was then spread over the top, and why does the cloud only cover the top?"

"That," replied the lieutenant, "was because a moist wind began to blow up that side of the mountain on which the clouds began to form. As the wind was forced up the cold slopes of the mountain, it was cooled by coming in contact with them, and especially by expanding in the upper regions of the air where the pressure is lower than at the surface. The chilling or

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cooling of the air was not sufficient to make the vapor visible until it reached the top of the mountain, when the cloud began to form."

"Oh, I see now," exclaimed Jack, who had been following the explanation closely; "and then the wind blew the cloud over the top of the table."

"But why did we only see the cloud rolling like a wave over the mountain-top?" inquired Harold. "Why did we not see that part of the plateau from which the cloud had been rolled away?"

"Because," replied Jack, "more cloud was being formed by the wind that was still blowing up the side of the mountain."

"That seems to be a very simple explanation, Jack," replied Harold. "Is Jack right, Uncle Arthur?" he said, appealing to the lieutenant.

"Yes, Jack's explanation is capital. I am glad to see, Jack," he continued, "that you observe such things so well and reason about them so clearly."

"I have always liked to study natural science," replied Jack. "There is so much that one can see going on around him, especially on a ship like the Ketrel, that one can't help puzzling himself all the time as to just how such things are caused. I have often wished to ask you or Captain Parker about these things, but have been afraid of bothering you."

"Don't hesitate to ask me, my lad," was the reply. "Come to me whenever you have any difficulties concerning such things. I am sure that in most cases I can make them plain to you. If I am busy when

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you come it will only be necessary for you to come again."

"I'll do it," said Jack eagerly, "and much obliged to you, lieutenant."

"And I'll come too, uncle," said Harold. "I would also like to learn about such things."

"I must leave you now, boys," said the lieutenant. "We stop at Cape Town to put off a part of our cargo and take in some new goods. There is much to do in the way of getting ready."

Harold and Jack now walked over to where Mr. Higgenbotham was standing. As they approached him he said:

"I see ye've been looking at Table Mountain, my lads. Did ye see them spreading the tablecloth fer dinner?"

"Yes," replied Jack, "we've been looking at them."

"I suppose ye'll agree that what ye hev seed is ruther mysterious. Kinder makes ye think of ghosts, don't it?" he inquired laughing.

"Oh, no," replied Jack; "you're only trying to kid us, Mr. Higgenbotham. That's only a cloud and can be easily explained."

"Oh," was the reply, "there ain't no difficulty about explaining that thar cloud, do ye say? I reckon ye'd find it hard ef ye came to try. Ye must allow that it don't act like an ordinary cloud. It bain't no sooner seed one side of the mountain that it begins to roll over the top, but it don't leave the top bare."

"Oh, well," exclaimed Jack, "there's no trouble

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about that!" And then he explained clearly what Mr. Harding had just been teaching him.

The boatswain, although a superstitious man, was nevertheless quite intelligent. Indeed, a great deal of his superstitious talk was put on as a sort of aid in the spinning of yarns, an occupation in which he greatly delighted. Jack's explanation was so clear that the boatswain had no difficulty in thoroughly grasping it, so he said in an admiring tone:

"I jest reckon ye've got that thar explanation straight. Whar did ye learn that, my lad?"

"Partly at Eton, the big English preparatory school you've heard of, but mainly from Lieutenant Harding, who has just been telling Harold and myself about Table Mountain."

"I like to hear about sech things," replied the boatswain. "I never hed the chance to go to school myself; for I've foller'd the sea almost since I wuz a lad. If now and then ye'd explain sech things to me, I'd like to hev ye do so, fer I loike to get hold of why things happen just as they do."

"I don't know much, Mr. Higgenbotham," replied Jack, "but what little I do know I'll be pleased to try to explain to you, and if I can't do this I will ask Lieutenant Harding to help me."

"Thank you, my lad, but ez we'll be in the harbor in half an hour I must leave ye now. I suppose ye will go ashore at Cape Town," he added.

"Yes," replied Harold. "Uncle Arthur promised to take both of us to the town as soon as he could get off."

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In three-quarters of an hour the Ketrel had dropped her anchor in Table Bay, in the harbor of Cape Town. This harbor is protected from the ocean by a break-water some two thousand feet in length. An hour afterward Lieutenant Harding and the two boys were landed in the city by one of the ship's boats.

Cape Town is situated at the base of Table Mountain some thirty miles from the Cape of Good Hope. It is an important part of the southern extremity of the African continent. Cape Town is the largest city in Southern Africa, in a district known as Cape Colony. The other important seaports are Port Elizabeth, Port Arthur, and East London, all of which are situated on the southern coast, but nearer its southeastern end.

The boys were surprised to find Cape Town so closely resembling a European city. There were many substantial buildings, a fine library, a museum, several cathedrals, handsome houses of Parliament, government offices, an observatory, and a botanical garden. There was also a railroad station, Cape Town being one of the southern termini of the Cairo to Cape Railroad, a railroad connecting Cairo on the Nile in Egypt with the extreme southern parts of Africa.

Cape Town is situated about six hundred miles southwest of the great Kimberly diamond mines. These are the most productive mines in the world, nearly ninety-eight per cent. of the world's diamond supply being obtained from them. There is also in Cape Colony, or in the neighboring regions on the

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north, considerable mineral deposits, in the shape of copper, gold, and other metals.

The Ketrel had carried a fairly large cargo of manufactured goods and hardware for the mining regions. There were, therefore, busy times on board in taking the goods out of the hold of the vessel and in taking on an additional cargo of various goods such as wool, ostrich feathers, etc., to be delivered at Yokohama, Japan. Since Captain Parker was desirous of making the stay at Cape Town as short as possible, he employed a number of stevedores to aid in unloading and loading. He had, therefore, no difficulty in leaving Cape Town about thirty-six hours after they had dropped anchor.

On leaving Table Bay the Ketrel steered to the south and then took an easterly course across the Indian Ocean.

The boys stood alongside Lieutenant Harding leaning over the taffrail and watching the continent of Africa as it grew less and less distinct.

“What land will we next sight, Uncle Arthur?” inquired Harold.

“If everything goes right,” was the reply, “we shall not see any large land mass until we reach the continent of Australia.”

“Do you intend to land at any Australian port?” inquired Harold.

“No, we shall sail up the western coast of Australia at some distance from the land.”

Nothing especially interesting occurred until they sighted the western coast of Australia and had sailed

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along it for several days. One day, however, while Lieutenant Harding was officer in charge of the deck, the lookout cried :

“ There’s a boat adrift on our starboard bow, sir.”

“ Boatswain,” the lieutenant said to Hiram who was in sight, “ man a boat and pick up that derelict.”

“ Aye, aye, sir,” was the reply.

Harold and Jack who, by this time, had become familiar with nautical terms knew that the word starboard meant that side of the vessel which is on the right-hand side of one who is standing facing the bow, the word being employed as the opposite for the word larboard or port. They therefore immediately looked on their right hand, but were unable to see anything, since they were much lower than the lookout at the mast-arm.

“ I wonder whether your uncle would let us go on that boat? I’d like to go all right,” whispered Jack to Harold.

“ I don’t know,” replied Harold in a low tone, “ but I wouldn’t dare to ask him while he’s on duty; for you remember he told us never to speak to the officer on duty unless he speaks first.”

This knowledge, however, did not prevent the boys from looking in a beseeching way to the lieutenant who, being a good-natured man and seeing the boys were greatly desirous of accompanying the boatswain, called to Hiram :

“ You can take the boys along with you, Hiram, if you think they won’t be in the way.”

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"All right, sir," was the reply. "They'll not be in the way. I'll be glad to have them go."

Both boys shouted with delight and were soon in the boat with the boatswain and a crew of four men rapidly rowing toward the drifting boat.

"So there are derelict boats as well as derelict ships or vessels, Mr. Higgenbotham?" inquired Jack.

"Yes, my lad, but not ez often, fer most open boats are apt to fill with water and sink unless some one is aboard to handle them right and to bail out what water they may ship. In sech boats ye may generally look to see a body of one or more dead sailors who hev died a-cause they hadn't enough wittles and drink aboard."

They were yet more than a mile from the drifting boat, but this distance was quickly decreased, and soon Harold, who had been intensely listening to something, said in an excited tone:

"Mr. Higgenbotham, I hear a dog barking. There is probably some one on that boat!"

Hiram listened as did the crew, and said:

"I allow you're right, my lad. There bain't no doubt but what that's a dog. There may, therefore, be some men on the boat; but we'll soon see." Then turning to the crew, he said: "Pull harder, my hearties; let's git thar as soon as we kin."

They moved rapidly through the water under the increased pull, and in a very short time reached the drifting boat. There was a dog in her sure enough, very much emaciated and with a starved look about it, so that it was as much as it could do to pull itself

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together and stand up, wag its tail, and again begin barking. Though much run down for lack of food and water they could see that it was a valuable animal.

"Oh," exclaimed Harold, "what a magnificent dog!"

The poor dog seemed to understand that the boy was speaking of it for, rapidly examining the faces of all the others, it looked at the lad with its beautiful eyes, gave a glad bark, shaking its tail as if begging for his friendship.

The dog was a splendid specimen of a full-blooded collie. It had a coat of long, flat, thick hair, a long tapering head, small partially erect ears, and a slightly curved tail. Its color was black and white. The ears and back of the head were black, and the forelegs, the front of the face, a large portion of the neck, especially in front, and the tip of its tail, snow white. The rest of the body was a jet black.

Their boat was soon alongside the drifting boat against which it was held by one of the crew. As soon as the two boats touched, the strange dog jumped into the Ketrel's boat, dragged itself to where Harold was sitting and lay down at his feet, as if it had chosen him for his new master, and began feebly wagging its tail.

"Poor doggie," said Harold patting the animal's head, "where did you come from? Are you glad we have picked you up?"

If the shaking of its tail and its bark meant anything it would certainly seem as if the dog was trying to show how very glad it was to be with people again,

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and be taken out of the boat in which it had apparently suffered so much.

In the meantime the boatswain had made a careful examination of the drifting boat. There was nobody on board and nothing whatever in the boat, not even its oar-locks. It had evidently not been occupied by any one except the dog.

"How do you suppose the boat got adrift, Mr. Higgenbotham?" inquired Harold.

At this time the boatswain was carefully examining the painter or rope at the bow of the boat by which it had been fastened.

"Can't say for sartin, my lad. There ain't nothing on the boat thet shows people hev been in it. Thar's no oar-locks or oars. I calc'late it has been cast adrift by the chafing of the painter while the dog wuz asleep in it. Wall, thar's nothing more to be done here so we'll get back to the ship."

Both boys had been petting the dog when Harold said:

"What shall we call you, doggie, "what's your name?"

The animal seemed to understand what was said to it, for looking straight into the eyes of the boy, he stood up and began to rub his head against the boy's hand so as to bring it in contact with a collar placed around its neck which had been hidden by the fur of the animal.

"See that," cried one of the men, "the animal acturally seems to onderstand what the lad said to him.

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See if thar's any name on the collar," he said to Harold.

"There is indeed," was the reply, reading the name "Rompey" in English on the collar.

"So your name's Rompey, is it?" inquired Jack.

The animal commenced to shake its tail and express its joy at its name being thus known.

"He's certainly a splendid dog," exclaimed Harold. "I wonder if we can find his owner?" he inquired of the boatswain.

Hiram laughed.

"I onderstand ye, my lad," he said, "ye'd like to keep the animal and are afeered lest the owner may turn up. Wall, I reckon ye don't need to give yerself any anxiety about that. We are here so fur from land and this boat has been drifting so long that I calculate no one is apt to claim the critter."

"I wonder whether Uncle Arthur will let me keep the dog and take it with us to Japan?" he inquired of Jack.

"I think he will, and I will ask the captain to let you have it."

"I guess the dog must be both hungry and thirsty," said Harold.

"Try and see," said one of the men.

As is well known, both water and provisions are always placed in a boat by a careful commander, even if it is to be absent from the ship but for a short time. So many things may happen at sea that it would be taking risks to do otherwise. So Harold gave the

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animal some water in a tin pail. The poor animal was indeed quite thirsty and greedily lapped the water, shaking his tail and every now and then stopping to lick his hand so as to show his gratitude.

“Now, doggie, I’ll give you something to eat,” said Jack, taking a piece of ship’s biscuit out of his pocket, breaking it into pieces and giving it to the dog which greedily ate it, and then went to the tin pail and wagging its tail plainly asked for another drink of water.

“You’d better not guv him too much food at first,” said the boatswain. “Animals, like men, when they eat too much food arter a long fast may die.”

They had now reached the ship which they boarded, and the drifting boat was then drawn on deck. There was no name on it, but under the bow the figure “23” was seen.

“No wonder that boat gotadrift,” said Jack laughing; “that’s the skiddoo number. Do you suppose that was the name of the boat or merely the number of a lot of similar boats?”

“Tain’t likely, my lad,” replied the boatswain, “that thar was any one who had twenty-three boats.”

The boys went directly to beg the captain and the lieutenant to permit them to keep the dog. It happened that Lieutenant Harding was the first to be seen, so Harold immediately said:

“O Uncle Arthur, see the poor dog that we found in the drifting boat. He’s a magnificent animal. Won’t you please let me keep him. He has made

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great friends with me. He immediately came and laid himself down at my feet when he jumped into our boat. He is a wonderfully intelligent dog."

There could be no doubt as to the intelligence of the animal. He appeared to know that the lad was asking permission to keep him, for he came to the lieutenant and placing his paws on his shoulder, looked into his eyes, or at least reaching his face as near as he could to the lieutenant's, began to lick his hands and utter a plaintive cry as if begging that he agree to Harold's request.

"The animal is certainly very intelligent," said the lieutenant, "and seems to have some idea of what is going on. I have no objection at all, Harold, to your keeping the animal, but of course the captain's permission must be obtained."

"Come, Jack," said Harold, "I've done my part. Now let's go to the captain and beg his permission."

Jack had no trouble in getting the captain's permission for, like all Englishmen, he was a great lover of dogs, so he at once said:

"Certainly, Jack, Harold can keep him. The dog appears to be a splendid animal. He's a full-blooded collie, a species of dog that when intelligent can be taught wonderful tricks."

The captain had no sooner said tricks than the dog seemed to understand him, for he at once looked at the captain as if to say:

"Yes, I can do tricks," and stood on its hind legs and then tried to walk. He was still too weak to do

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much of this, so he then showed them his next trick in which he lay down pretending to be dead and then afterward jumping up and shaking his tail.

The captain laughed heartily at the antics of the dog and said:

“ You have a wonderful dog there, Harold, and I don’t doubt but that you will soon be able to teach him many new tricks. You have my full permission to keep him. Of course, if his owner should ever turn up and wishes him back again you must give him up. I don’t think, however, there is much chance of this ever happening, so you can properly regard the animal as your own.”

By careful feeding Rompey soon recovered his full strength and became a great favorite with every one on the ship, especially with the boys, but it was evident that Harold was the dog’s favorite from the moment that he first saw him on the boat.

“ Harold,” said his uncle one day, as he stood looking at the dog playing with the boys, “ I’m almost certain that Rompey’s former master was a young boy like yourself. Possibly the boy somewhat resembled you, and for this reason the dog has taken to you rather than to any of the others.”

“ If that is so,” replied Harold, “ I’d like to know that boy, for he certainly treated his dog all right.”

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## CHAPTER V

### IN THE SEA OF JAVA AND THE CHINA SEA

ONE day, some time after the finding of the drifting boat, Lieutenant Harding told the boys that if nothing went wrong they would sight the Strait of Sunda next morning.

“Come into the chartroom,” he said, “and I will point out where this body of water is situated.

“As you see,” he remarked, pointing it out to them on the chart, “it is a small passage of water that separates the islands of Sumatra and Java; Sumatra being on the west and Java on the east.”

“How large is the channel, lieutenant?” inquired Jack.

“About one hundred miles long and twenty miles wide at its narrowest part,” was the reply. “Since it separates the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, and lies nearly in the direct route to China and Java by way of the China Sea, many vessels pass through it. The chances are we will pass a number of vessels to-morrow when we sail through it.”

“When do you think we will sight the coasts of Sumatra and Java, uncle?”

“Sometime near sunrise,” was the reply. “You must be up early if you wish to get the first view of it.”

The boys were up bright and early. Going at once

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on the deck they found the lieutenant looking over the starboard taffrail near the bow. As the boys approached he said:

“Good morning, my lads, up early to get a sight of land?” and pointing to a long dim line on the horizon, he said: “That is the island of Java, and that,” he said, again pointing to another line toward the west, “is the island of Sumatra.”

“Uncle Arthur,” inquired Harold, “about when will we be in the channel?”

“Sometime between nine and ten o’clock this morning,” he answered. Looking at his watch he added, “There’s several hours before that time, so let’s go and get something to eat.”

This was an invitation a healthy, growing boy never turns down, so they were soon in the cabin eating a good breakfast. When they had finished, Jack said:

“Lieutenant, do you mind if Harold and I go to the charthouse? I would like to look up the names of the different islands near the Strait of Sunda.”

“Not at all,” was the reply. “Come, I’ll go with you and give you a short lesson on the geography of this part of the world.”

They were soon bending over the chart that contained the information they desired.

“As you see,” remarked the lieutenant, “the island of Sumatra lies near the peninsula of Malacca, or the Malay Peninsula, from which it is separated by the Straits of Malacca. Java lies south of Sumatra. Sumatra and Java, together with many neighboring

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islands, belong to a group called the Sunda Islands. The Strait of Sunda takes its name from this island chain. North of the Sunda Islands is another island chain consisting mainly of the islands of Borneo, Celebes, Gilolo, Ceram, and Papua, while still farther to the north are the Philippines. These island chains are known as the East Indies. As you can see, the East Indies lie between the continents of Asia and Australia."

"I want," said Jack, "to look up the name given to the body of water at the northern end of the Strait of Sunda."

"As I told you the other day," said the lieutenant, "the Strait of Sunda connects the Indian Ocean on the south with the Pacific Ocean on the north. That part of the Pacific Ocean, however, which connects with the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Sunda is sometimes known as the China Sea although, perhaps, more correctly is called the Sea of Java. I think it is better to use for it the name Sea of Java, and the name China Sea for the part that lies between China, Malacca, Borneo, and the Philippine Islands."

About half-past nine the Ketrel was sailing through the Strait of Sunda. They passed several vessels sailing in the opposite direction, and could see two others that were moving in the same direction as themselves. The lieutenant, pointing to a little island thirty miles to the west of the island of Java, handed his field-glasses to Jack and said:

"Take a good look at that little island, and then

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give the glasses to Harold. It is a very remarkable bit of land. I wish you to look at it carefully."

When they had done this Harold turned to his uncle and remarked:

"Well, Uncle Arthur, we have both seen it. It's quite small and don't seem to be remarkable."

"What is its name?" inquired Jack.

"It is the island of Krakatoa," was the reply.

The boys again looked at the island and now noted that some smoke was escaping from one of its mountains. Jack then said:

"I remember reading about that island, lieutenant. It is volcanic, ain't it?"

"Yes," was the reply, "that little island has become celebrated throughout the world by reason of a wonderful volcanic eruption that occurred on it during August, 1883."

"Please tell us something about this eruption, will you, sir?" asked Jack.

"I'll be glad to do so, my lad. It's a very interesting story," he added. "Though a volcanic island, yet before the eruption of 1883, Krakatoa had not been in eruption since the year 1660. The people who lived in that part of the world, either thought that it had never been a volcano, or if it had been one, would never again erupt; that is, they thought it had become extinct. They discovered their mistake in August, 1883, when the inhabitants of Batavia, Java, at a distance of about one hundred miles to the northeast of Krakatoa, were alarmed by noises like the firing

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of great guns. These explosions were accompanied by a trembling of the earth's crust that caused the houses to shake. But in Java there are so many volcanoes that neither the explosions nor the shakings of the earth greatly alarmed the people except at first, especially as these noises soon ceased and the tremblings stopped.

"They should have known that the noises and tremblings were nature's warnings of a coming great eruption. On the twenty-sixth of August, 1883, the awful sounds were again heard, and the earth began to quake violently. The next morning, after spending most of the night in the streets, the people found that the heavens were so covered with clouds that when the time came for sunrise there was very little light; indeed, the darkness increased so that it was soon necessary to light the lamps in the streets and houses. Clouds of ashes now began to fall from the sky, covering the roofs of the houses and the streets of the city with thick layers. Shortly afterward the most tremendous explosion occurred."

"What was the sound like, uncle?" exclaimed Harold. "Was it as loud as the discharge of a big cannon?"

"Very much louder, Harold," was the reply. "But you must not suppose that there was a single explosion or crash and that then all was over. On the contrary, the explosions followed one another so rapidly that they produced an almost continuous roar, the loudness of which was greater than has probably ever

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occurred before on the earth while it has been inhabited by man."

"I suppose these sounds were so great that they could be heard at a great distance from the volcano," remarked Jack.

"Yes," was the reply. "You will be surprised to know that some of them were so very loud that they could be heard at a distance of nearly three thousand miles from Krakatoa. That is, if the eruption had taken place in the city of New York or Boston, the sounds could have been heard in Paris or London."

"The volcanic eruption of Krakatoa," continued the lieutenant, "was of a kind known as an explosive eruption. Instead of the lava quietly rising in the crater and flowing over the top, or escaping through an opening lower down on the side of the mountain, there was a tremendous explosion or a series of explosions, and the lava was thrown upward in the form of ashes, some of which are believed to have reached a height of twenty-one thousand miles above the top of the mountain."

"What are volcanic ashes, lieutenant?" inquired Jack. "How are they formed?"

"When molten rock or lava is thrown far up into the air," was the reply, "it is broken into small pieces that harden on cooling and fall to the ground as ashes. Sometimes these ashes are still so hot that they emit a dull red light as they fall through the air."

"It must have taken a long time for the finer ashes to settle down from a distance of twenty-one thousand

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miles above the top of the volcano and to have reached the earth's surface again," said Jack.

"It did, indeed, Jack. How long do you think it was before these ashes finally settled on the earth leaving the air clear?"

"I guess it must have taken a long time, possibly several hours."

"How long do you think, Harold?" turning to his nephew.

"It must have taken a long time, but I don't think it took as long a time as Jack says."

"You are both way off," replied the lieutenant. "It was over a year before all the ashes reached the earth's surface. Of course, I mean the finer ashes; or, as they are generally called, the volcanic dust; for this material is so light that it floats for a long time in the air, and even when it does gradually fall, and thus comes nearer the surface, it is apt to be again caught by the winds and carried from place to place."

"How could they know the ashes remained in the air?" inquired Jack.

"Do you ever remember, Jack," was the reply, "the air being so hazy that you could look directly at the sun without blinking?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "I remember several times during the autumn when the air was so filled with haze that I could look directly at the sun that appeared of a deep blood-red color."

"Well, Jack, in most such cases this appearance is due to the presence of minute smoke particles in the

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air probably caused by forest fires. Now, for at least a year after the eruption of Krakatoa there was a haze in the air over nearly all parts of the world. The sun appeared like a huge red ball moving through the skies, and at the same time there were most gorgeous sunset and sunrise colors of the heavens due to the presence of fine particles of volcanic dust.

“But,” continued the lieutenant, “there were many other wonderful effects caused by this eruption. Immense waves were formed in the ocean that traveled nearly around the world. Some of these were from sixty to eighty feet high and caused great damage to the shipping as well as to the towns near the sea-coasts. No less than thirty thousand people lost their lives by these waves. Some of the waves were so powerful that on parts of the coast of Java they tore huge stones weighing nearly forty tons up from the bed of the ocean and flung them far into the interior.”

“One would hardly think,” said Harold, “that so small an island as Krakatoa,” at which he was then looking through the field-glasses, “would be able to do so much damage.”

“You can’t always judge the amount of mischief that there is in anything from its size,” replied the lieutenant smiling.

“Do you mean that for me, uncle?” inquired Harold laughing.

“Possibly,” was the reply.

The Ketrel passed safely through the Strait of Sunda and entered the Java Sea, and in due course of

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time it was sailing through the China Sea in a general northerly course. As they were about entering the waters of the China Sea the boatswain approached Harold and Jack who were standing near the stern of the vessel watching the wake or track in the ocean which the ship made in passing through its waters, and pointing to a small object that could be occasionally seen projecting a short distance above the surface, said:-

“Kin ye see that, boys?”

“Yes, sir, what is it?” inquired Jack.

“It’s a shark. Thet feller is liable to foller us fer many miles. I hev watched him doin’ this fer the last half-hour.”

“Well,” said Harold laughing, “he don’t scare me, Mr. Higgenbotham. Mr. Shark can do us no harm as long as we remain on the brig.”

“I don’t gainsay ye, my lad,” said the boatswain; “but I’m free to confess that I don’t like to see a shark follering the Ketrel. Ye must know that all sailors are agreed it’s a bad sign fer a shark to foller a ship. It a’most allus means trouble to some of the crew. Some one is goin’ to die or fall overboard, or something is goin’ to happen to the ship.”

Notwithstanding the croakings of Hiram, the boatswain, nothing did immediately happen to the ship; but several days afterward, while still in the China Sea, the boys, who were sitting in the cabin near the open door where they could hear much of what was going on on deck, were greatly surprised to hear the captain, who was on deck, ordering the sails of the

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vessel to be doubled-reefed. As there was almost no wind stirring they could not understand this order, so taking the first opportunity when the lieutenant was disengaged they asked him the reason for double-reefing the sails when there was no wind.

“The barometer is very low, boys,” he said, “and is still falling. Jack, I have taught you to read the barometer. Go into the cabin and tell me at what height the mercury is now standing.”

“It is at twenty-nine and thirty-four hundredths of an inch (29.34), sir,” said Jack on his return.

“Then it has fallen two-tenths of an inch since I last saw it half an hour ago.”

“Do you think we’re going to have a storm?” asked Harold, for both boys understood that a falling barometer generally indicated a high wind or storm.

“Yes, my boys, we all think that there is going to be a severe storm. Come with me into the cabin,” added the lieutenant some fifteen minutes afterward, “I want to see if the barometer is still falling.”

“An examination of the glass showed that the column now stood at 29.13 inches.

“The storm is certainly coming,” exclaimed the lieutenant. “I must go on deck with the captain!”

The boys followed the lieutenant to the deck where they found unusual activity. The captain was giving orders, getting everything in readiness to meet the storm. To an untrained eye there did not seem to be any cause for anxiety. The ocean was calm and glassy, and the air quiet, though exceedingly sultry from the

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large quantity of water vapor it contained. But the wind soon began to blow, mildly at first, but gradually increasing in violence, while the sky became overcast with clouds. During the next half-hour the barometer showed a height of 28.11 inches, or over an inch lower than it was about half an hour previously. The thin hazy clouds rapidly increased and became dark masses. The rain began to fall heavily, and the violence of the wind greatly increased.

It was now late in the month of July, a time when severe storms are common in this part of the ocean. The storm that had broken was of the kind called in those parts a typhoon, a variety of whirling storm generally known elsewhere as a cyclone. In cyclonic storms the wind moves in vast eddies or whirls around an area where there is no wind and in which the barometer is low. Such storms are called hurricanes in the West Indies, typhoons in the China Sea and, as already stated, are generally known as cyclones by reason of the circling or whirling motion of the wind.

But besides their whirling motion cyclonic storms advance rapidly over a curved path, the shape of which is that of a curve called a parabola. In the Northern Hemisphere the direction of this curved path is toward the northwest near the place where the storm begins, and continues in this direction until it reaches about latitude 30° N., when it turns and begins to move toward the northeast.

It is a matter of considerable importance to the safety of a vessel that its captain learns the position of

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the calm center of the storm, and then endeavors, as far as possible, to prevent the ship being blown into this place, for it is at the edge of the calm center that the wind blows the most fiercely and changes its direction in its whirling path so rapidly that before the vessel can alter her position as regards the wind she is apt to be wrecked. The captain, therefore, instead of permitting his ship to sail on with the wind, boldly steers her away from this center to the outer circumference of the whirling mass.

In order to determine the position of the calm center one must remember the direction in which the wind rotates. This is always the same in the same hemisphere. In the Northern Hemisphere, for example, the storm rotates in a direction opposite to that of the hands of a clock, while in the Southern Hemisphere it rotates in the same direction as the hands of a clock. If, therefore, one turns so as to take the wind in his teeth, that is, directly in his face, if he is in the Northern Hemisphere the calm center will be on his right, while if in the Southern Hemisphere it will be on his left; and as soon as he learns this rotation he boldly steers toward the circumference of the storm.

As soon as the storm struck the Ketrel Captain Parker ascertained the position of the calm center, steering the ship so as to cross the storm and reach its circumference. He was fully aware of the great danger of permitting the ship to pass through the "eye of the storm" as the calm center is called. It was during this time that the ship encountered huge waves

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that struck her sides with enormous force, greatly straining her timbers. The ship began to leak badly, and the order was given to man the pumps with as many men as could be spared from the sailing of the ship.

The wind which had now increased in velocity at last became so strong that the three masts were snapped off close to the deck. They fell over the bulwarks of the vessel, and being held in place by the rigging, commenced to pound the ship's sides savagely, and to punch holes in them.

In order to remove this new danger the captain ordered some of the crew to cut away the rigging, first to the leeward, and then as soon as this was done to cut it away at the windward. This last operation was by far the more dangerous, but was happily done without any loss of life. The danger from the pounding of the spars was thus removed. A still greater danger was now presented. The vessel, deprived of her sails, no longer promptly answered to her rudder and began to drift, and huge waves struck her again and again dangerously straining her timbers. At this moment one of the crew approached the captain and reported :

“ Officer in charge of the pumps, sir, reports the water gaining in the well.”

The captain gave orders to send additional men to the pumps. By this time, having practically crossed the storm, the immediate danger from the waves was over, though every now and then the ship, still continuing to drift, was struck by fairly heavy seas.

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Throughout the entire storm the heavy rain which fell was accompanied by severe lightning flashes. About this time an unusually heavy bolt struck the ship and evidently set fire to her, for another of the crew approached the captain and cried:

“ Lieutenant reports the vessel afire, sir.”

“ Boatswain, pipe all hands on deck except those at the pumps to fight fire.”

This was promptly done, but it was evident that the fire, fanned as it was by the furious wind, and despite the heavy rain that was falling, was gaining on them.

At that moment another man approached the captain and said:

“ Officer in charge of pumps, sir, reports the vessel sinking.”

The captain convinced that the ship was practically lost reluctantly gave the following order:

“ Man the boats! Boatswain, see that plenty of water, food, and other necessary things are placed in them.”

There was great activity on board as additional food and water were hurriedly placed in the boats and the boats lowered from the davits. The captain divided the crew into separate parties, assigning them to the different boats. As there were no passengers aboard, and the crew was under excellent discipline, there was no difficulty in having this done in an orderly manner, so that in a comparatively short time the boats, safely launched, were pulling away from the vessel which was evidently rapidly sinking. The captain's boat was the

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last to leave the Ketrel, and when it had joined the other boats, that were pulling slowly, at a distance of about seven hundred feet from the vessel, they could see her, staggering like a wounded animal, suddenly disappear, being swallowed up in the ocean.

The captain, addressing the officers in charge of the other boats, said :

“ We’ll try to make the China coast which I believe lies only a few hundred miles to the west. My boat will lead the way and the others will follow. Lieutenant Harding, keep your boat at the end of the line.”

The boats were rowed in a more or less straight line following the captain’s, and so continued late into the night, they having left the ship about five o’clock in the afternoon.

Although the storm had now almost passed, the sea continued rough, so the crews at the oars were obliged to labor hard in order to keep the boats from receiving the waves broadside. Even as it was, the boats would occasionally ship considerable water so that it was necessary to constantly bail the water out of them.

In the boat commanded by Lieutenant Harding there were present besides the lieutenant, the boatswain Higgenbotham, the two boys, and two of the crew. The question of permitting Rompey to go with them was settled by the dog himself; for waiting until they were about to leave, he sprang into the boat as the last man of its crew had entered, and going at once to Harold he quietly laid himself down at the lad’s feet as if quite assured that his master would not desert him.

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The lieutenant looked for a moment both at his nephew and at the dog apparently hesitating whether he was justified in permitting the animal to remain, but he apparently concluded to say nothing, and giving the order to the men the boat was soon pulled away from the ship.

During the night a second storm burst upon them. Fortunately this was much less severe than the typhoon, and was one of the storms that so often follow in the wake of cyclones. It continued with a sky overcast for five long days, during nearly all of which they were prevented by a headwind from making much progress toward the China coast. At times it seemed as if their boat must be swallowed by the heavy waves that struck it. Indeed, these were so strong that two of the crew were washed overboard and lost. On both of these occasions Rompey only escaped being swept overboard because Harold held tightly on to him as well as to the boat.

The boys had plenty of hard work to keep the boat from swamping by continual bailing. During all this time it was necessary to keep both men at the oars, although at times Jack insisted on relieving the lieutenant, who then took his turn in bailing.

It is not our intention to describe the details of that awful voyage in the open boat. For five long days they were battling with the waves. The men were at the oars and the two boys at hard work bailing. It is unnecessary to say that during all this time they endeavored to make their position known to the other

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boats by loud hurrahing, and occasionally by firing their rifles and revolvers, but they received no answer. It was evident they had become hopelessly separated from the other boats.

The discipline on board the Ketrel had been too good to prevent any mistakes having been made in placing sufficient water and food in the boats, so that they did not suffer either from hunger or thirst during their long voyage in the open boat.

During all this time the sky had been so overcast that it had been impossible to take any observation of the sun and thus determine their position. Of course, the lieutenant had kept in his mind the general direction of the boat, so that he had some idea as to what their position was.

## CHAPTER VI

### DESTRUCTION OF THE BOAT

A FEW hours after midnight, on the fifth day from the time of their leaving the ship, the wind had almost completely died down and the storm was nearly over. There was no longer any necessity for bailing the boat, so the lieutenant insisted that the boys should rest for a while. So lying down in the bottom of the boat they were soon in a deep sleep with Rompey watching them. There was now no difficulty in keeping the head of the boat directed so as to receive the waves on her bow, hence the two men also rested themselves by rowing more leisurely. While in this position, and while almost dozing from exhaustion, they were suddenly aroused by the loud barking of Rompey. The next moment a dark object suddenly loomed before them, and their boat received a severe blow near its bow, thus turning it sharply around.

“We have been struck by a derelict,” cried the lieutenant, at once realizing what had happened.

As the boat swung around he caught hold of the side of the hulk, bidding the boatswain do the same. They were thus able to secure their boat to the derelict by attaching the painter near its stern.

In the meanwhile both the barking of Rompey and the blow received from the derelict awakened the boys.

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“What’s the matter?” they inquired of the lieutenant.

“We’ve been struck by a derelict,” was the reply.

“What can we do to help?” asked Jack.

“Try to keep the boat from sinking by bailing, while the boatswain and I get our provisions and other stuff on the deck of the derelict,” he said to the boys. He then turned to the boatswain and said: “Boatswain, can you reach the deck?”

“Aye, aye, sir; I think I ken reach it by this here chain.”

The boatswain, who was as agile as a cat, soon reached the deck. The lieutenant then threw to him the end of a spare rope and at once began to tie some of their food and other things to one of its ends, the boatswain rapidly hauling them up to the deck and throwing the rope down again for another load. In the meantime the boys had plenty to do to keep the boat from sinking, for she was leaking badly. At last everything was out of the boat, even the water-butts.

“Now, boys,” said the lieutenant, “I know you can easily go up that chain onto the deck of the derelict.”

“We can,” was Harold’s reply, “but won’t you first sling the rope around Rompey so as to haul him to the deck?”

“Yes, I think that can be done,” said the lieutenant, “if the animal don’t struggle too much.”

Harold spoke encouragingly to the dog while the lieutenant passed the end of the rope around his body immediately back of the forelegs, and he was soon

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safely hauled on the deck, Jack and Harold following him. By the time they reached the deck, observing that their boat was nearly filled to the gunwale with water, the lieutenant fastened the end of the rope they had been using for hauling their goods on the deck to the stern of the boat and said to the boatswain:

“ Make fast your end to something on deck, boatswain,” and was soon with his companions on the deck of the derelict. “ If the boat holds until to-morrow,” he said, “ we will do what we can to get her aboard.”

As soon as they had all reached the deck the lieutenant said: “ Let us thank God for the mercies he has shown us during the past five days of peril.”

It was long after three o’clock in the morning when they reached the deck of the derelict. It was still too dark to see either the kind of a vessel on which they had climbed or its condition, so they remained on deck waiting for the rising of the sun or at least the breaking of the day. While there the lieutenant said:

“ Now we have left the Ketrel and are cast away on a derelict, we must agree on the one who shall lead the party. There must be a head if we are to act intelligently and are to lose no chance for escaping.”

“ All right,” replied the boatswain, “ you are naturally the one fer our captain, so I wote fer ye.”

“ And so do we,” replied the boys.

“ Then,” said the lieutenant, “ I’ll take command and shall of course expect prompt obedience. There are so few of us, however, that I don’t think it will be necessary to make very severe rules.”

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“ Shall we call you captain now? ” inquired Jack.

“ Sartin, ” said Hiram, “ and call me Hiram. I’ll call the boys Mr. Harold and Mr. John. ”

“ Oh, no, ” said Jack, “ if you must call me mister, please call me Mr. Jack. ”

“ All right, ” was the reply.

The morning broke with a clear sky and bright sunlight. The storm had now completely died away, and the ocean was fairly free from waves. There was a low bank of clouds on the eastern horizon. Some cirrus or curl clouds in the higher regions of the atmosphere were lighted up with the beautiful colors of the sunrise. These colors being reflected by the waves made a picture that was all the more beautiful by comparison with the dark skies and the gloomy waters of the past five days.

“ One can hardly believe, ” said the lieutenant, “ that these are the same heavens and waters that were so stormy and inhospitable only a short time ago. ”

Of course they carefully searched the horizon with their field-glasses to see if there were any traces of their companions. But there was nothing in sight. This caused them great sorrow, for they all had friends on the missing boats. Jack was especially worried, since in the short time he had been with Captain Parker, his guardian, he had learned to like him very much.

“ I wonder whether Captain Parker’s boat and the other boats escaped the storm, ” said Jack addressing Hiram.

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"I kain't say, Mr. Jack," was the reply; "but Captain Parker is a good sailor and there bain't no reason why t'other boats shouldn't hev escaped as well as ounr."

"What do you think, Uncle Arthur?" exclaimed Harold.

"I think the chances are that the other boats have escaped. The long boat which was commanded by Captain Parker was provided with water-tight compartments and was, therefore, much less likely to sink than the smaller boat we had. But let us see whether our boat has followed us during the night."

On looking over the side of the derelict they saw that only the ends of the ropes by which the boat had been secured to the stern were hanging loosely over the side of the vessel. The weight of the water in the boat had evidently been too great for the ropes, so that the boat had apparently broken loose during the night.

"I'm sorry to have lost our boat," said Captain Harding. "We might have mended it and thus have had a chance of reaching the nearest land to which the derelict might take us in her wanderings."

The morning light had of course shown them that the derelict, that had first nearly drowned them and afterward offered them a safe and comfortable place to live in for a while, was a brig—a name given to a two-masted, square-rigged vessel. The brig had evidently been through a severe storm, though not one of recent date. From its general appearance it had apparently

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been drifting in the ocean for a long time. Both masts were broken off close to the surface of the deck, the splintered ends being left projecting upward. The bowsprit was nearly entire. It was a standing bowsprit, that is, one fixed permanently in its place. Of course, the rigging in this and in other parts of the brig was entirely missing. All the rails were uninjured, though in some places they had been weakened by the waves. The decks too appeared to be water-tight. The quarter-deck was raised, the cabin being in the poop.

Between the cabin and the stern there was a small passageway which separated it from a charthouse.

The forecastle deck, or the name given to the foremost part of the upper deck, underneath which the sailors had their berths, also appeared to be in good condition. Both the captain and Hiram noticed when they began to look around that all the doors in the elevated parts of the ship, as well as the hatches or openings through the deck with the exception of that opening into the forecastle, were closed and covered by tarpaulins that were battened down over them. The door of the cabin was closed but not locked.

"I allow the crew warn't in much of a hurry when they left," remarked Hiram to the captain.

"No," was the reply, "they took time to fasten everything down so as to keep the water out as long as possible. That's another reason why the brig floats so high in the water. Let's see in what condition her rudder is," continued the captain.

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"Her rudder hez been carried away," said Hiram, who had climbed over the taffrail and down a part of the stern. "The starn-post is all right, but the false starn-post hez gone."

"It is unfortunate," said the captain.

"It be, sir," replied Hiram; "but ef we find the rest of the brig in good condition we might rig up a jury rudder and a jury mast and take the vessel into some port."

For the sake of those of my readers who are not familiar with nautical terms, it may be said that a jury rudder and jury mast are the names given to such makeshifts as may take the place of the regular rudders and masts when these latter are injured during a storm.

In reply to Hiram's remark the captain said:

"I fear, Hiram, we shall find the vessel water-logged."

"She lies pretty high out of the water fer a water-logged vessel, sir," replied Hiram.

"That's probably because she is loaded with some light cargo such as lumber, and possibly too, she is provided with water-tight compartments. Now let's examine her sides," continued the captain, "I hope we'll find them pretty sound."

An examination showed that on the whole the vessel was sound above the water-line, but that her timbers had evidently been greatly strained by blows from the waves.

"What do you think, Uncle Arthur?" inquired

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Harold. "Will the brig float for some time yet? Is there much danger of her sinking soon?"

"Since she has safely passed through the storm that struck us," said Jack, "there wouldn't seem to be much chance of her sinking now."

"No, Jack, there don't, indeed. From the appearance of the brig it seems that she has weathered many, many storms since she became a derelict."

"How can you tell, sir?" inquired Jack.

"In many ways," was the reply. "Look at the splintered ends of the masts. As you see, the wood does not look as if it had been broken off yesterday, or even several months ago, but has evidently been exposed to the waves and the weather for a long time. Then the sides of the vessel are covered with a green slime and there are barnacles growing below the level of the water. Everything seems to show that the brig has weathered many storms since she was deserted and became a derelict. I do not think there is any probability that she will founder soon."

"Well, that's good," exclaimed Harold.

"And now," said the captain, "if you are all as hungry as I am I guess the next thing to do is to see if we can warm up some of the provisions we brought with us in the boat and make a cup of coffee. Let us see if we can find the galley."

Fortunately the galley had been located below the main deck. Removing the tarpaulin that covered the hatchway they found the galley which, as perhaps most of my readers know, is a small room or other

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place on the deck or below it where the cooking is carried on. The galley had not been injured by the storm, so that the iron cook-stove it contained, although rusty, was in fairly good condition. Moreover, there had been provided, as perhaps is not generally done, a quantity of soft coal for burning. A wooden coalbin in a corner of the room still contained nearly a ton of coal.

When Hiram saw the cooking utensils in the galley he said :

“ I’ll try my hand at cooking. While I arn’t a fancy cook, yet so fer ez making a cup of coffee and toastin’ some of the ship’s biscuits we brought with us from the boat are consarned, I calc’late I kin hold my own with most eny cook wot follers the sea.”

Of course Hiram carried matches, for, being an inveterate smoker, he was careful to be provided with the means for lighting his beloved pipe. Everything was damp, so there was no little trouble in starting a fire with the soft coal. The stove smoked dreadfully at first. This was soon found to be due to a piece of cloth that had been stuck into the top of the stovepipe where it passed out on the deck apparently for the purpose of keeping the water from entering the galley.

“ Look at that,” exclaimed Hiram. “ The crew afore they left this vessel wuz mighty keerful to stop up all holes where water could git in.”

The clearing out of the stovepipe effectually stopped the smoking, and a fire was soon briskly burning in the galley. There was a wooden bucket with a long

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but slender rope attached to its handle and a mop that had been left in the bucket.

“I reckon a little bit of sea-water to swab out this here room would make it sweeter like,” replied Hiram, letting down the empty bucket over the side of the vessel and dexterously filling it with water and then hauling it aboard. A half-hour’s hard work greatly improved the cleanliness of the galley. On the walls were hanging various pots, pans, and kettles that had been employed for cooking. Those made of tin were hopelessly rusted. Others, however, that were either enameled or formed of galvanized iron—that is, iron covered with a thin layer of metallic zinc—were in fairly good condition. So too were some copper kettles. These latter, however, were covered with a green crust of verdigris formed by the oxygen, carbonic acid gas, and moisture of the air rusting the copper.

“That green stuff’s pisenous,” said Hiram, “but a little rubbing with elbow grease or sandsoap or sich like will make ‘em shine like a new copper penny. Ye kin throw them things overboard,” he said, pointing to the hopelessly rusted iron vessels. “The others ye may clean as well as ye kin while I’m gitting breakfast ready.”

The boys were glad to do this, for of course they expected to take their part of the work while on the brig. Jack started to take the bucket to dip it into the ocean to get some water when Hiram said:

“Ye’d better let me do that, Mr. Jack, ye might lose the bucket. Ye may think it easy to dip a bucket of

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water from the sea, but ontil ye git the hang of it ye'll find it harder than it looks."

Filling the bucket with sea-water he emptied it into one of the largest of the galvanized iron vessels, and then returned for another bucket of water which he employed for swabbing the ceiling, walls, and floors of the galley.

"See here, Jack," cried Harold, "I have found a bar of sandsoap and two scrubbing-brushes," pointing to a part of the room which Hiram had yet left unswabbed.

By the use of the brushes and the sandsoap, together with plenty of water, the pans, pots, and kettles were at last reduced to approximate cleanliness. The copper kettles gave them the greatest trouble, but after considerable work then, as well as after breakfast, they succeeded in making them shine, as Hiram declared they would, like a new copper penny.

While the cooking was going on and the boys were engaged in cleansing the pots, pans, and kettles, the captain went to the charthouse in the stern of the vessel right aft of the cabin. This was a fairly large room that was provided, on the side opposite the door, with heavy glass windows that had resisted the blows of the waves. He found the door shut but unlocked, and therefore had no trouble in opening it. The room was quite damp and the air heavy, but opening the window and leaving the door open the entrance of the sunshine and the blowing through of the air soon made the room fairly sweet.

On each of the two sides of the room, between the

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door and the window two berths had been provided, so that it seemed that the brig at one time had need for extra sleeping accommodations. A locker on the side opposite the door and below the window, was filled with charts that had been neatly rolled up and covered with oiled silk to keep the damp out. The middle of the room was provided with a table on which lay an open chart of the Atlantic Ocean.

Examining the bedclothing in the berth the captain found it in good condition and clean, but very damp and musty, so stepping to the galley where he found the boys still busy in scouring the pots, he said :

“ Jack, stop your work a moment and come and help me move some things out of the charthouse,” and with the aid of Jack, he took the bedclothes and bedding off the bunks and spread them out on the deck in the sunlight to dry and be aired.

In about an hour, after swabbing the room and cleaning the pots and kettles, Hiram sent Harold to tell the captain that breakfast was ready. The boys had found a number of plates and cups and saucers which they had cleaned for use during their meals.

That first breakfast on board the derelict brig was a meal long to be remembered. It was not much of a meal so far as the character of the food went, for it consisted of some hot canned soup Hiram had heated in one of the pots, of toasted ship’s biscuit, and plenty of hot coffee. But they were all very hungry, and hunger is a sauce that has never yet been equaled for creating an appetite, provided the hunger has not gone

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too far. Nor was it surprising that they were all exceedingly hungry, for during the five memorable days they spent in the open boat it had been impossible to have any warm food, nor indeed had there even been much time when it was possible for them to eat, since on the part of the men it was almost continuous laboring at the oars to keep the boat headed right, and on the part of the boys, almost equally hard work, by constant bailing, to keep the boat from swamping.

When breakfast was over Hiram went with the captain to examine the charthouse. There was still a musty smell about the air of the room, and everything was covered with dust, for dust collects in the air even far out at sea.

“I’ll swab out this room, sir,” exclaimed Hiram, going to the galley and returning with a bucket of seawater and his swab. “My lads,” he said, turning to the boys, “get your brushes and scouring soap and see what ye kin do towards cleaning up.”

After nearly an hour’s hard work the chartroom was thoroughly cleaned and completely lost its mouldy smell.

In the meantime the captain had turned the bedding and the bedclothes a number of times, so that they were rapidly drying. He had also looked into the cabin on the poop-deck. As soon as he opened the door, however, there came so awful a smell from it that he quickly closed it, and returning said to Hiram and the boys:

“The air in the cabin is so foul that I think we will

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leave examining that part of the vessel till early to-morrow morning and then see what we can do toward cleaning it out. Fortunately, we have plenty of food and water which we brought with us in the boat to last us a long time. We can find comfortable living quarters in the charthouse, so that, as we are all very much done up by the hard work of the last five days, we will take things easy until to-morrow morning."

"I'm glad of that, uncle," exclaimed Harold; "I am so sleepy I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"So am I," exclaimed Jack.

"Well, so far as that is concerned, my lads," replied the captain, "so am I, and I guess so is Hiram; nor is it astonishing, for you remember that during the five days we were in the open boat none of us had much sleep. I think, therefore, it will be best to take this afternoon and evening for sleeping."

"That's good," said Jack; "we'll try to make up for the sleep we have lost during the last five days."

By this time the bedding and bedclothing which they had repeatedly turned were found to be dry enough to replace in the bunks. The boys were now so sleepy that they found it almost impossible to keep awake. Indeed, as soon as the bedding was in place they looked so longingly at the berths that Hiram, who was then alone with them in the chartroom, said good-naturedly:

"My lads, ye've had hard work. I'm going to git something ready fer dinner. Throw off your coats,

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shoes, and pantaloons and turn into the berths on one of the sides of the room. When dinner's ready I'll come and call ye. There's some chocolate among the foodstuff that was placed in our boat, and this with a can of condensed milk and water will make a tarnation good cup of chocolate. Then I'll het up some canned soup and toast some more biscuit, and that'll make a fust-class dinner considering all things."

It did not take the boys long to throw off their coats, shoes, and trousers and turn into the berths.

"Take the lower berth, Harold," exclaimed Jack, "I'll take the upper one." And soon both lads were in a deep sleep. Rompey, who had kept close to his young master all this time, jumped into the berth and curled himself up at Harold's feet.

In about an hour Hiram returned and awakened the boys who were soon dressed and enjoying a hearty dinner.

At their first meal Hiram had tried to persuade the captain and boys to eat their food alone, saying that he would wait until the second table.

"No, Hiram," exclaimed the captain; "there are so few of us now that we will not stand on ceremony, but will all eat together."

During the dinner the captain remarked:

"To-morrow we'll take an account of our food supplies, and especially of our fresh water. There is almost sure to be among the stores of the brig plenty of canned goods and salted meat that have been left untouched, most of which I hope we'll find in good

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condition. I also trust we shall find the tanks full of good drinking-water."

By the time dinner was over it was clear that the captain was wise in his determination to do no more work either in the line of exploration or cleaning until the next morning, for both he and Hiram showed very plainly the need of rest. The different kinds of work they had been doing had caused the day to pass so rapidly that it was now two o'clock in the afternoon, so when dinner was over the captain said :

" We must all get some sleep. Of course it would be wrong not to leave a watch on deck. We will, therefore, divide the day into the usual watches."

Jack, who by this time had already had some little rest, and seeing that both the captain and Hiram were greatly in need of sleep, and that the short nap had made Harold if anything sleepier than before, asked that the first watch be given to him.

This was agreed on with the understanding that at six o'clock Jack should awaken the captain who should then take the second watch, that Harold would take the third watch, and Hiram the fourth. This being arranged, Hiram and the captain taking the two berths on the opposite side of the charthouse, the captain the lower berth, and Hiram the upper berth, with Harold and Rompey in the lower berth on the boys' side of the house, they were soon all asleep with the exception of Jack, who thus had his first experience on the watch in a vessel at sea.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE GHOST OF THE DERELICT

NOTHING unusual occurred during Jack's watch, so at six P. M., or as they say at sea, at four bells, he called the captain and telling him that there was nothing to report turned in. The captain remained on deck until the close of his watch when he called Harold.

It may be well here to explain for such of my readers as may not be acquainted with nautical terms the manner in which the hours of the day and night are divided at sea. As a rule, the crew of every vessel while at sea is evenly divided into two companies called watches, that take turns going on deck, so that each half of the crew is four hours on duty and four hours off. In merchant vessels such, for example, as the Ketrel, one of these watches, called the starboard watch, is assigned to the captain, but is often commanded by the second mate during good weather when it is not necessary for the captain to be on deck. The other watch, called the larboard or port watch, is commanded by the first mate. This was Lieutenant Harding's watch on the Ketrel.

In order to prevent the watches of any half of the crew from falling on the same hours throughout the voyage, the watch between four P. M. and eight P. M. is divided into two half-watches called dog-watches.

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This causes the twenty-four hours of the day to be divided into seven, an uneven number of watches, instead of six, into which it would otherwise be divided.

The beginning and the ending of each watch is indicated by bells. Bells are also struck in order to indicate the different hours of the day. To this end bells are sounded at the close of every hour and every half-hour during the day and night. For example, eight bells are rung at noon, and every fourth hour afterward; that is, the eight bells are rung at noon, at four, eight, and twelve o'clock.

The time between four and eight P. M., is divided into the dog-watches, or as they are called, the first and second dog-watches; that is, from four to six P. M., and from six to eight P. M.

The intermediate hours of the day are indicated as follows: the greatest number of bells that are sounded, that is, the greatest number of successive strokes given on a single bell, being eight. The bell following the eight bells that indicate noon, is one bell, which means half-past twelve. Then at one o'clock two bells are sounded; at half-past one, three bells; at two, four bells; at half-past two, five bells; at three, six bells; at half-past three, seven bells, until finally eight bells indicate four o'clock, when these are again repeated; one bell then indicating four-thirty, and two bells five o'clock, etc. As will be seen an even number of strokes always indicates the full hours, while the odd numbers the half-hours.

The bells are sounded in sets of two strokes; thus



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four bells are sounded by two sharp strokes, then a slight pause, followed by two more sharp strokes.

The captain called Harold at ten o'clock, or at four bells. Before turning in he said to the lad :

"Now, Harold, remember that when on watch one is in a very important position. You are the only one who will be awake, and on the care you take in watching may depend our safety. Don't for a moment think of lying down, for you might fall asleep, and then not only would I be greatly ashamed of you, but you would also be greatly ashamed of yourself."

"Why, Uncle Arthur," exclaimed the boy in astonishment, "you don't think that I will be unfaithful during my watch?"

"No, my lad," was the reply, "I do not think you would intend to be unfaithful, but you are very young and are still quite tired. I am only warning you of the danger. If I thought for a moment you would be purposely unfaithful I would never think of placing you on watch."

"I will keep awake all right, uncle; and then Rompey, who will watch with me, will help keep me awake. Won't you, Rompey?" he said, turning to the dog.

The dog shook its tail and gave a sharp bark as if to say there would be no trouble while they were together. And then turning to his uncle, Harold said :

"Now, uncle, lie down and get some sleep. You need it."

"I will, my lad," was the reply; "but before I go to



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sleep I want to say this. Should anything happen that you think Hiram or I should know, don't hesitate to call us. But be sure you don't call us unnecessarily, since we both need rest. I believe, however, I can safely leave this matter to you."

The captain turned in and was soon fast asleep. Harold took up his watch, not only around the door of the chartroom, but occasionally walking forward as far as the hatch of the forecastle.

It was a beautiful night. The stars were shining brightly; the surface of the water was so quiet and smooth that, like a huge mirror, it reflected the heavens brightly from its surface. Rompey, of course, followed his master, who occasionally spoke to him in a low tone.

Nothing occurred until shortly after midnight, when Harold noticed that whenever he walked toward the open hatch leading into the forecastle Rompey showed uneasiness, giving a low growl every now and then.

"He thinks he hears something," said Harold to himself. "What is the matter, Rompey," he said, addressing the dog, "do you see or smell anything?"

The animal only wagged his tail as if to say:

"I am not quite certain, but I don't altogether like this part of the vessel."

Toward one o'clock, as he was again passing the open hatchway, Rompey was still more uneasy and again began to growl, standing at the open hatchway and looking as if he expected something to rush out of it.

"What's the matter, Rompey, do you smell a rat?"

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I suppose there might still be a few rats aboard," he continued. But the next moment he was startled to hear sounds resembling the moaning of a human being in pain or suffering. He was at first disposed to run and call his uncle or Jack, but remembering what his uncle had said about unnecessarily disturbing them, he refrained from doing this, especially as the sounds ceased. Rompey stopped barking, and looked up in his face as if to say:

"I guess I was mistaken. There's nothing here to alarm us."

Harold continued his watch until, looking at his timepiece, he saw that it was two o'clock and that his watch had ended; so he called Hiram who was soon dressed and ready to take his place.

"Anything to report, Mr. Harold?" he inquired.

"Nothing, sir, except that shortly after midnight while passing the open hatch over the forecastle Rompey seemed uneasy and began to growl, and again, about an hour ago, he stopped at the open hatchway and looking down into the hold he began to growl and bark in an angry manner. At the same time I believed I heard a moaning sound like that of a person in distress. At first I thought of calling you, but afterward concluded that it was not of sufficient importance to wake you."

"Perhaps ye thought it might be a speerit," said Hiram in a bantering tone.

"No, no," replied the lad, "I don't believe in ghosts or spirits."

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"Well, Mr. Harold," said Hiram, "I allow I do; but I reckon it warn't no ghost or speerit ye heerd. There are a many things to be heerd on a vessel at sea. Better turn in now, my lad, and I'll watch the rest of the night."

It is not an unusual circumstance that people like Hiram, who though themselves exceedingly superstitious, yet are intolerant of anything like superstition in others. Therefore, when Harold told him what he thought he had heard, Hiram only laughed at him. He kept close watch, however, every now and then walking past the open hatchway in the forecastle where he always stopped to listen. But no sounds reaching him, he at last became convinced that there was nothing there and finally forgot all about it.

Toward five o'clock, however, shortly before the breaking of the dawn, while passing the hatchway something occurred that greatly terrified Hiram; for he distinctly heard a voice exclaiming as if both in reproach and anger:

"You're a devil! You're a devil! I'm starving; give me something to eat!"

"There be no mistake in that," said Hiram to himself in a horrified tone. "The devil hez cum aboard and is torturing a ghost of one of the crew that died or wuz murdered in the fokesel. Think I'd better call the cap'in, but I guess I'll wait awhile; fer I'm afeerd he'll laugh at me. He is always telling me I'm too superstitious."

Though a very superstitious man and therefore cow-

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ardly about unreal things, yet Hiram was as brave as almost any man concerning anything he believed to be real. He therefore courageously stood near the opening of the hatchway listening intently, and was again horrified to hear the words distinctly:

“ You’re a devil! You’re a devil! Do you intend to starve me? I’m hungry; I’m thirsty. You’re a devil! You’re a devil! ”

And then to his great horror he heard a strange whizzing sound and felt something of a faint, whitish color on which, however, he could see a patch of bright red, which he at once concluded to be blood, brush past him through the air.

“ It’s the speerit of a murdered man,” he cried. “ I kin see the blood marks. I suttinly must call the cap’-in.” Running to the charthouse he called out: “ Get up, cap’in, get up. The devil hez cum aboard and is torturing the ghost of a murdered man.”

Hiram was so excited and called out in so loud a tone that the two boys as well as the captain were awakened. Hurriedly dressing they all ran out followed by Hiram and the dog and were soon standing in front of the open hatch of the forecastle. Rompey reached the place first and stood at the door barking furiously. There could be no doubt that he either smelled something or heard something within.

There was something uncanny on being suddenly aroused from a sound sleep and before one is thoroughly awake to hear what those four people heard when looking down the forecastle hatch. There was

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a low moaning sound as if coming from some person in great distress. This sound was distinctly repeated several times.

Hiram's face assumed the ashen tint of fear. Turning to the captain who, to his great surprise, did not appear to be at all frightened, for he simply regarded the sounds as something that required careful investigation,

"Do ye heer that?" exclaimed Hiram in an excited voice, and then turning to the boys he said: "Do ye heer that?"

"Yes," replied Harold, "it is something like what I heard this morning and told you about."

"I don't think you should be frightened at that sound," said the captain.

At this moment, however, they all heard distinctly a querulous voice exclaiming:

"You're a devil! You're a devil! I'm starving; give me something to eat and drink."

"There, sir," exclaimed Hiram turning to the captain, "ain't that awful? What do ye think of that?"

"I don't know," said the captain coolly, "but I soon shall," and taking a match out of his pocket—for like Hiram the captain was a great smoker, though not so inveterate—struck the match and holding it in his hand walked down the ladder leading into the forecastle.

"I'll go with you, captain," said Jack bravely following him down the ladder.

Harold looked down into the hatchway while Hiram remained at some distance, greatly surprised at what

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he regarded as the wonderful courage of the man and boy.

When the captain and Jack reached the bottom of the ladder the match was extinguished, being blown out by something that passed rapidly over their heads.

The captain coolly lighted another match and almost immediately both he and Jack were heard laughing heartily. The next minute the captain's head appeared coming up the ladder holding on his wrist an emaciated poll-parrot which had settled itself on his wrist. The bird's feathers were bright red, green, and some others tinted with white. Although greatly delighted in seeing human faces, yet the bird kept up its croakings, crying:

“ You're a devil! You're a devil! I'm starving; give me something to eat.”

“ Hiram,” cried the captain laughing, “ I have brought you both your devil and your ghost. The poor bird had evidently been aboard for some few days and is now nearly dead from starvation and thirst. Notwithstanding the uncomplimentary remarks it has been making about me, it is evidently rejoiced to see a human face again, so as soon as I lighted the second match it flew toward me and lighted on my wrist, and has been trying to show how pleased it is to meet me, although, as you see, it still persists in calling me a devil.”

Hiram appeared to be greatly ashamed of himself and contented himself by merely saying:

“ Well, this is sartinly on me. I allow I wuz wrong

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thet time, but this don't prove that the devil don't come on ships at times."

The boys began to pet the poll-parrot. The poor bird was very weak and emaciated, and appeared pleased with the boys, especially with Jack, who ran and got it a drink of water and fed to it some soaked biscuits. It greedily ate the biscuits and drank the water.

"Don't give it too much at a time, Jack," said the captain.

"Captain," said Jack, "since Harold got Rompey I suppose I may keep the parrot?"

"Yes," was the reply, "you may have him, so give him a name that we may know how to call this additional member of our crew."

"I think," said Jack laughing, "I will call him Satan, for this is what he persisted in calling us when he first saw us."

"It's a good name, Jack," said the captain laughing; "we'll call him Satan."

"I wonder what Satan was doing on the brig," said Harold. "He couldn't have been here since the vessel first foundered."

"Oh, no," replied the captain, "the vessel has been too long a derelict. I imagine that the bird was blown here by the wind from some vessel that passed her during the late storm."

## CHAPTER VIII

### TAKING AN ACCOUNT OF STOCK

IT was now so near six o'clock that none of them thought of trying to get any more sleep. Hiram, therefore, began preparations for breakfast, while the boys after airing the beds and bedclothes made up the bunks and tidied up the chartroom. In the meantime the captain examined the charts in the chart-locker. When the boys' work was completed the captain said:

"Come with me to the cabin, boys, and we'll see if we can't open some of the windows and let the air in."

The opening of the door disclosed the same intensely disagreeable odor; an odor resembling that produced by putrefying flesh.

"What can it be, Uncle Arthur?" exclaimed Harold. "What a beastly smell."

"It's an animal odor," said Jack. "I wonder if we'll find a dead body in any of the bunks!"

"I've been thinking of that, Jack," replied the captain. "But it is hardly possible, for the brig has apparently been a derelict for so long a time. I certainly hope we shall not. Let's try to open the windows. Jack, come and help me. We'll hold our breath as long as we can, make a dash, try to get one of the windows open, and then run out of the room."

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It took them so long to open one of the windows that they were obliged to take several breaths in the vitiated air. They then left the room as agreed, and after a few moments went and opened another window, again leaving the cabin. In this way they soon had all four windows open so that the wind circulated through the room. The air that came out of the cabin was so disagreeable that they sought the galley and watched Hiram making preparations for breakfast.

It will be understood that the cabin, being on the poop or quarter-deck, was only partly above the top of the main deck, it being entered by means of a companionway or staircase, like a flight of ordinary stairs. The windows referred to were located in the sides that projected above the top of the main deck.

At last Hiram had the breakfast ready. This meal, like the two meals of the preceding day, was eaten outside the galley. Satan, who was evidently accustomed to eat with people, insisted on remaining with Jack, perching not on his wrist but on his right shoulder. Every now and then it would provoke them to laughter by some quaint remark such as:

“A piece of cracker here.” And then on receiving it would gravely say, “Thank you.”

“Satan has been well brought up,” said Jack laughing.

At first there was some difficulty in keeping Rompey from attacking the bird, but Harold soon made it plain that the bird was to be regarded as one of them. Before long, therefore, the two animals were living hap-

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pily together, Satan soon learning the dog's name, and apparently taking great delight in endeavoring to imitate Harold's voice while calling him.

When breakfast was over they all turned in, the captain as well as the boys, and helped Hiram clean up. The captain then said:

"Hiram, let's make an exploration of the cabin. It is a splendid room. I was glad to find the floor free from water. Of course everything is damp and the air smells as if there was much putrefying animal matter in it."

Although the air of the cabin was much less offensive than when first opened, still it was too disagreeable to continue to breathe. Going to a drawer in a large table that occupied the center of the room the captain found two papers that he knew would give them the particulars of the brig as well as the character of her cargo. These papers were the log-book and the brig's manifest.

The log-book, or as it is frequently called, the log, is a journal kept by the first officer in which are entered, from time to time, the direction and character of the wind, the weather, the course taken by the vessel, and the distances sailed. Besides this, it contains an account of any noted action on the part of any of the crew or passengers, meritorious or otherwise, that is deemed worthy of being recorded.

The manifest is a document signed by the master of the vessel, giving an account of the name and tonnage of the vessel, the place to which she belongs, with

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a full description of her cargo. This description specifies the number and character of the separate packages of the cargo, the names of the ports from which they have been taken aboard, as well as those for which they are designed.

As can be seen, a careful perusal of the log-book and the manifest would give them valuable information concerning the derelict. In this way they soon learned that the name of the brig was the Fanny Watson, of Boston; that she had left Liverpool with a cargo of canned goods; various food products, groceries, and hardware; had stopped at Lisbon for a cargo of cork, wines, nuts, and raisins; that she had then crossed the ocean and taken in from a New England port her principal cargo consisting of lumber, much of which was in the form of mill-work; *i. e.*, doors, sashes, window-frames, shingles, joists, rafters, and boards suitable for flooring and sheathing. She was bound for Melbourne, Australia. Her cargo was intended for use in the mining districts, both as supplies for the miners, and for the erection of their houses. It appeared from these books that the vessel had been wrecked near the Straits of Magellan while doubling South America. It was evident too, from the date on which they had been obliged to abandon the brig, and the date when she was boarded by her present occupants, that it had been floating in the ocean for somewhat over a year.

“A very valuable cargo for people in our condition, Hiram,” exclaimed the captain. “I think that most of the foodstuff will be found in excellent condition.”

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"Thar bean't no doubt in my mind," was the reply, "but thet we'll find it all right as fur as the stuff is consarned that wuz packed air-tight and water-tight. Howsumever, I reckon wharever the water or air could get at the eatables they bean't now of much account."

It was gained from the papers which contained the names and numbers of the crew that there was a single passenger on the brig named Dr. Charles B. Parsons, of Boston.

"Why, I know that man," exclaimed the captain. "He and I were students together in geographical physics at Oxford! The doctor was an unusually intelligent and bright man. He was well off and so was able to continue his studies in physics, while I was compelled to follow the sea for a living. I noticed a well-filled bookcase in the cabin in which we will probably find an excellent library, as well as a lot of splendid physical instruments, preparations, specimens, etc., for I understand that the doctor was off on a long cruise in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for the purpose of obtaining data for a book he was writing, called "The Physical Geography of the Sea."

When the captain had ceased speaking he continued reading one of the papers. A shade of sadness came over his face. Finally, he looked up and said:

"Poor fellow. I'm sorry to hear this. The doctor was swept overboard by a heavy wave that washed the deck the day before the vessel was abandoned."

"Uncle Arthur," cried Harold, "if so much of the

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cargo consists of lumber and cork that would explain why the brig floats so high out of the water."

"That's right, Harold," was the reply. "Let us now make a further examination of the cabin," he continued. "Hiram, we will try to open some of the deadlights and let more air enter the room." When this was done, he said: "We must now try to find the cause of this horrible smell."

The opening of the doors and windows of the cabin had sufficiently cleared the air to enable them the better to localize the portions from which the bad odors were coming. When they had first opened the cabin door all parts of the air were equally offensive, but now a brief examination showed that the stench came from a number of glass jars and other vessels containing fish, birds, etc., that had originally been covered with alcohol. The corks or stoppers had not been sufficiently tight so that the alcohol had evaporated, and the specimens, undergoing putrefaction, were pouring out awful odors into the air of the cabin. It was evident the doctor had been making a collection of the animals of the sea that he intended to describe in the book he was writing. While there was no doubt that he was well informed concerning the habits of many of the animals of the deep, yet he had either been careless or ignorant of how best to preserve them.

Taking one of the largest jars in his hand the captain started at once for the companionway, saying:

"Let's throw all this stuff overboard."

"Shall we save the bottles, sir?" inquired Hiram.

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"No, they will be of little use; throw them overboard."

When this was done, although the smell had been somewhat decreased, yet it still remained almost intolerable.

"Pears to me, sir, that it comes from this here barrel," pointing to a large wine cask standing in one corner of the cabin.

Removing a loose wooden cover from its top they saw that the barrel was fully three-quarters full of portions of the internal organs of a shark, dolphin, and other large deep-sea fish. It had probably once contained sufficient alcohol to cover the specimens, but the alcohol had evaporated long ago and the contents were in the disgusting state of putrefaction.

"Help me heave the whole thing overboard, Hiram," said the captain.

This was finally done, when the air of the cabin, relieved of its principal source of contamination, rapidly grew sweeter.

There could be but little doubt as to the part of the contents of the cabin that possessed the greatest attraction for the captain. This was a library of four or five hundred books arranged on shelves that occupied a part of the cabin immediately opposite two bunks. As Hiram afterward pointed out, it was evidently in order to find room for this bookcase that two bunks on that side of the cabin had been removed. Possibly these were two of the bunks they had found in the charthouse.

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An examination showed that although the books were in a musty condition, with many of the covers badly warped with dampness, yet they were not otherwise injured and could be readily employed for the purpose of study.

"This is a magnificent collection of scientific works, not only including geographical physics, but also ordinary physics, chemistry, electricity, mechanics, etc."

"That's magnificent, captain," said Jack.

"Yes, Jack," replied the captain turning to the lad, "you and I will have a splendid time reading these books. It looks now as if we should have much spare time on our hands, so that I can give you a great deal of help in your scientific studies."

"And where do I come in?" asked Harold laughing.

"Oh, you'll come in with Jack," replied the captain good-naturedly; "but, of course, since you are younger than Jack you would hardly care to spend the greater part of your time with me in study."

"No," replied Harold, "not all of my time; but still I want to learn about these things, so you and Jack may expect to see a good deal of me in the cabin."

After completing a somewhat hurried examination of the library, the captain began to inspect the various scientific instruments the doctor had employed in his studies. These included a magnificent aneroid barometer, several recording thermometers, a deep-sea thermometer, a hydrometer, an anemometer, besides many other devices. Fortunately, all these were

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in good condition with the exception of the anemometer that had been injured by the shocks given to the vessel by the waves during the storms. Besides these there was an excellent camera with a collection of photographic chemicals and a gross of dry plates.

"Now let us see some of the captain's apparatus," exclaimed the captain, "that he used in the navigation of the vessel."

These included a splendid chronometer, a pair of powerful field-glasses, and a sextant.

"Jack," said the captain, "I am going to teach you how to calculate latitude and longitude. Sometime this knowledge may be of great use to you. Do you know anything about trigonometry, algebra, and geometry?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "I went pretty far in these branches while at Eton."

While this examination was being made, Hiram had been examining with great interest a small gun-harpoon; that is, a harpoon that is fired from a peculiarly constructed gun. This harpoon was made wholly of tough steel, and was provided with a long chain or shackle to which a piece of stout line was attached. It was of the same type as that employed in whale-fishery, only much smaller.

"I reckon," exclaimed Hiram, "thet the doctor used this fer taking some of the big critters."

"There is no doubt of it," was the reply. "We may be able to use this harpoon to advantage from the deck. At least it will be convenient, since having no

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boat we would otherwise be unable to haul in our game if we succeeded in killing it."

Jack, who had been examining a locker, said:

"Captain, here is something that will be of much value to us."

"What is it, Jack?"

"It is the doctor's medicine chest. It also contains some surgical instruments."

"Yes," said the captain, "that's a valuable find, Jack. These medicines are such as are apt to be required at sea. I guess the doctor, although a passenger, when necessary acted as the doctor of the brig."

The examination of the principal articles in the cabin being thus completed, Hiram remarked:

"Hedn't we better move some of the things outside, and swab and clean out the cabin as we did the chart-house?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Boys, spread the bedding and the bedclothes of the bunks out on the deck and help Hiram with some of the movable articles. I'll take the scientific instruments and place them in the charthouse."

There was a large round table in the center of the cabin that was of course screwed down to the floor. A hanging oil lamp attached to the ceiling had originally been placed over the center of the table, but it had been broken during the storm, as had also some crockery and glassware. They threw the broken pieces overboard, and collecting the uninjured pieces placed them in the charthouse.

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There was now nothing to do but to remove a heavy wooden table-cover that was left on the table after the regular tablecloth was removed. Of course, the captain and the doctor of the brig had taken their meals in the cabin.

An hour's hard work by Hiram with the swab, and by the boys with the scrubbing-brushes and scouring soap soon made the cabin cleaner and sweeter than it had been for a long time. By this time the bedding being dry, the boys made up the berths, the tablecloth was placed on the table, and the captain, aided by Hiram, replaced from the charthouse such of the scientific instruments that were attached to the walls.

"There be only two berths in the cabin," exclaimed Hiram. "Ez soon ez we get fixed up I'll rig up a large berth for you, cap'in, and the two lads kin hev the other berths. As for me, I'll bunk either in the charthouse or in the fokesel."

"You can bunk with us if you prefer, Hiram," said the captain.

"No," was the reply, "I'd ruther leave it ez I've arranged."

An examination was now made as to the condition of the stores. The lower hold of the vessel, or all that part of the vessel that is situated between the ship's bottom and the lowest deck, was filled with water, at least all that was not filled with the cargo of cork and lumber. This part of a merchantman is generally called the lower hold in order to distinguish it from what is known as between decks; that is, the portion of the

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vessel between the upper or main deck and the lower deck. Fortunately, the water had not entered the between decks, reaching as it did not quite to the top of the lower deck.

As they had expected, the canned goods were found to be in excellent condition. At least this was the case with the soups and such vegetables as tomatoes, corn, green peas, and lima beans. The canned meats also appeared to be in good condition although, as the captain said, it might be dangerous to use them until he made an examination to see whether they were free from ptomaines, very poisonous products that are found in meats and other organic materials that have been kept too long. The barreled flour, of which there was a large quantity, was musty and unfit for use. The barreled sugar had partially melted, owing to the moisture that had collected on it, but the melted sugar had sufficiently hardened so that there would be no difficulty in employing the greater part of it. Such dried products as beans, green peas, hominy, lima beans, common beans, etc., were in fairly good condition.

They were especially pleased to find that a great number of food products had been packed in water-tight and air-tight sealed packages in order to prevent them from spoiling while passing the equator. These packages contained such articles as biscuits, crackers, Indian meal, tapioca, etc. Besides this there were jars containing pickles, India relish, bottles filled with choice molasses, vinegar, wines, etc. They found several

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full casks marked port wine from Oporto, together with several barrels of almonds and other nuts, and several boxes of raisins. There were in addition a large supply of barreled pork and beef, which appeared to be in good condition.

Among the groceries was a large supply of coffee, tea, and chocolate placed in air-tight packages.

“We have enough food here,” replied the captain, “to feed us liberally for several years. The most important thing that now remains is to see the condition of the water supply.”

“This here cargo is worth a sight of money, sir,” remarked Hiram.

“It is, indeed,” was the reply.

They were especially fortunate in finding that the water tanks, which consisted of cisterns built of malleable iron plates, contained a large supply of good water. By sounding them by tapping against the outside they found that most, if not all of them, were filled.

Of course there were many other things they discovered either during this or subsequent examinations that we will refer to as the occasion arises. We must not, however, fail to mention two things discovered by Hiram that greatly pleased him. These were the boatswain’s locker, containing the tools and smaller articles employed by this non-commissioned officer, and a complete set of carpenter and joiner’s tools which he found among the hardware and household apparatus.

“It’ll be werry odd,” said Hiram, “if I kain’t find

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some use fer these here tools when we get things on the brig more in a shipshape condition."

They had been so interested in the examination of the stores that the dinner hour had more than passed, so they stopped work and helped Hiram to prepare a capital meal from some of the stores found on the brig.

It will of course be understood that during these examinations both Rompey and Satan were present. Satan was especially interested in the packages of sweet chocolate, for as soon as he saw them he began crying:

"I'm hungry! I'm hungry!" and he kept it up until Jack stopped him by giving him a piece of sweet chocolate which he held in his hand, while Satan tore off fragments with his beak, not forgetting every now and then to say gravely:

"Thank you."

So too, did Rompey come in for his share of good things, not only getting a piece of the sweet chocolate, but also a large cracker.

"We will not attempt to sleep in the cabin to-night," said the captain. "Although we have thoroughly cleansed it, I think it better to leave it open all day to-morrow. Therefore we'll pass the night in the chart-house."

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## CHAPTER IX

### IN THE KURO SIVO, OR THE BLACK WATER

THE next four or five days were spent fixing up the cabin, cleansing the forecastle, throwing away such of the food products as were hopelessly spoiled, and in rearranging the remainder. Hiram had obtained from the hold some pieces of scantling and boards with which he had fashioned a comfortable berth in the cabin for the captain.

During this rearrangement of the goods they of course obtained a much better idea of the character and condition of the cargo. They found the articles of hardware to be badly rusted, though by no means worthless. The household goods had also suffered considerably from the water, but were generally in fairly good condition. They were pleased to find a number of mattresses and a plentiful stock of blankets and sheets. Some of these mattresses were narrow ones such as are employed on cots, so they threw away all the old mattresses and the covering in their bunks, replacing them with the new articles, after thoroughly airing them. Hiram persisted in his determination to make up his bunk in the charthouse.

Besides the above work Hiram had strengthened such portions of the railing as had been weakened by the action of the waves during storms.

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One morning, about a week after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, Hiram called the attention of the boys to the fin of a shark that was seen occasionally projecting above the surface of the water in the wake of the vessel.

"Do you see that 'ere shark wot is follerin' us? That means more bad luck is coming," said Hiram.

"Oh, come, Hiram," said Jack, "you're jollying us for sure. You don't mean to say you believe that this is the same shark we saw in the wake of the Ketrel?"

"Sartin, Mr. Jack, I reckon 'tis the same feller. When a shark keeps in the wake of a vessel it generally smells a dead body on it, and he generally keeps on follerin' it until he gets that body."

"Well," said Jack, laughing now more loudly than ever, "I don't deny that he might have smelled a dead body on the derelict, and he wouldn't require a very delicate sense of smell either to do that; for the doctor's specimens, especially those in the wine cask, smelled loud enough I'm sure. If that's the same shark he must have swallowed them by this time. If he did he couldn't be very particular."

"Ugh!" cried Harold, shuddering at the remembrance of the horrible odor of the pieces of flesh in the barrel. "I should think not."

"It bean't dead flesh that feller smells now," persisted Hiram; "it's the flesh wot he knows will be dead afore long. It's one of us he's waitin' fer."

"Well, Hiram," said Jack, "you are a Jonah for

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sure. I can't understand how a bright man like you can believe in such nonsense. I don't believe it is the same shark. There are plenty of sharks in the sea, especially in these waters."

"Wall," replied Hiram obstinately, "I allow it may not be the same feller, but it's always bad luck fer a shark to foller a vessel. You'll find nearly all sailors will agree with me that a shark in the wake of a vessel means bad luck to that 'ere vessel. Don't forget, Mr. Jack, that the shark that foller'd the Ketrel brought bad luck to it, didn't it?"

"I don't know," replied Jack. "It was not the shark that brought the bad luck, but the storm. But why don't you look on the other side of the story, Hiram?" he continued. "You may call our meeting with the derelict bad luck, and I admit that it was to a certain extent; and yet in another way we can look on it as a great piece of good luck, for we are certainly very comfortable here. We have plenty of food and water; there is no danger of sinking, and it would seem that before long we must be picked up by some passing vessel."

"I allow we may be picked up," said Hiram; "but what if a cruiser should sight us, and seeing that we wuz a derelict should try to sink us by firing her great guns?"

"Oh, don't be such a croaker, Hiram," exclaimed Jack.

It was evident that Hiram felt Jack had got the better of him in the argument, for he was sensible

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enough to see that the lad's arguments were sound. Like many superstitious people, however, he was obstinate, and endeavored, by looking on the gloomier side of the situation, to prove that there had been a streak of bad luck brought them by the shark in their wake. Seeing this, Jack changed his method of attack on Hiram's superstition.

"Hiram," he inquired, "what would you say if we should kill that shark? Would that change the streak of bad luck?"

"Sartin, Mr. Jack. If we could sink that 'ere critter the streak of bad luck he's bringing would sink with him."

"Then," replied Jack, "I guess we'll sink him. Come, Harold," he continued, turning to his companion, "let's go to the cabin and ask the captain if we may try to kill the shark with our rifles."

On entering the cabin they found the captain sitting at the round table reading.

"Captain," said Jack, "we can see the fin of a big shark following in our wake. Hiram says it means bad luck. I have been trying to convince him of the absurdity of this belief, but have been unable to do so. Would you object if Harold and I try to kill the shark with our rifles; for Hiram agrees that if we can sink the shark we will sink any bad luck he may be trying to bring?"

"I have no objections, Jack," replied the captain. "Indeed, I will join you. I have been cleaning the doctor's shooting irons and would like to try this ex-

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press rifle," he said, pointing to one of the doctor's weapons. "As you see, Jack, it is of large caliber and carries a heavy ball. I think a ball from this rifle would be very apt to settle the shark."

"And any bad luck he may bring?" inquired Harold laughing.

"Yes, and any bad luck he may bring which, of course, is no bad luck at all," was the reply.

The captain and the two lads were soon standing with their rifles at the stern of the vessel. The shark, however, evidently alarmed, fell behind.

"I guess he smells the guns," exclaimed Harold.

"Or sees the bad luck they are apt to bring to him," added Jack.

They remained at the stern of the vessel for about ten minutes when the shark again forged after the vessel and at last approached to within a hundred feet.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "let's shoot together. Aim a little below the fin and where you suppose the heart is. Fire when I reach the word 'three,'" he said, commencing to count.

The three rifle-shots were heard almost simultaneously when the number three was reached. One of the shots certainly struck the animal—possibly all three did—for almost instantly the water was dyed a reddish color and the shark disappeared, but in a few moments it was seen floating with its belly upward on the surface of the water. Its death had so nearly been instantaneous that one of the balls, possibly that of the express rifle, had passed through the heart.

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"I wonder which of us hit him," exclaimed Jack.

"I'm sure I did," said Harold, "for I drew a bead right on to his body below the fin."

"Well, for the matter of that," said Jack, "so did I, and I guess you did too, captain, did you not?"

"Yes," replied the captain, "I'm pretty sure I hit him."

"If you wish to be sartin," said Hiram, "we could git the harpoon-gun and, landing the harpoon in the critter's belly, draw him alongside. Not," he added, "that he's very good eatin', but we could git considerable ile out of the liver."

"I hardly think we will try it, Hiram," said the captain. "We have plenty of food and the harpoon-gun has not yet been cleaned."

It was evidently a great relief to Hiram that the shark had been killed.

"Well, Hiram," inquired Jack, "are you satisfied? Do you think that has turned our bad luck?"

"Sartin, Mr. Jack," replied Hiram in a tone which showed that he was fully convinced of the fact. "Thet surely ends our bad luck as fer as that 'ere shark is consarned."

"But, Hiram," said Jack in a mischievous voice, "that shark is still following us." For the dead body floating in the water was being carried by the ocean current in the wake of the vessel.

"Yes," said the captain, "and will follow probably for weeks."

"I ain't afeered of that, my lad," said Hiram.

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"But, Hiram," inquired Harold who saw of course that Jack was jollying Hiram; "how about the shark's spirit? That will follow us, won't it?"

Evidently the inquiry had awakened some mistrust in Hiram's mind, but he answered, although not in a very positive tone:

"I ain't afeered of Mr. Shark's speerit, Mr. Harold," he said. "At least I have never heerd of sich things bringin' any bad luck with them."

"Captain," said Jack, as they went into the cabin to put away their rifles, "if you are not busy won't you please show me on some chart the probable route of the brig from the time it was wrecked off the coast of South America to the time it struck our boat? I have been wondering how it could get so far from the place where it was abandoned."

"Yes, uncle," said Harold, "please do. Jack and I were talking about this a little while ago. Of course we know that it is the ocean currents and the winds that have brought her here. We have been wondering if you could show us the course it probably took."

"I have plenty of time, boys," was the reply. "It happens that I have just been endeavoring to puzzle out this question myself. See here," he said pointing to a splendid chart of the Pacific Ocean on which the ocean currents had been plainly marked.

"Where did you get that, uncle? Among the doctor's papers, I suppose?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I found it among a number of very valuable charts in the locker. The doctor has

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evidently given close attention and study to ocean currents, for I find on the margins of the charts notes in his handwriting concerning the direction of the currents. You will notice," he continued, "that in several cases he does not agree with the direction of the currents as marked on the chart."

The two boys had been carefully examining the chart while the captain was talking, and as soon as he stopped talking Harold exclaimed:

"Now, Uncle Arthur, please show us the exact route by which the brig reached its present position."

"I don't think it is possible to point out its exact route; is it, captain?" inquired Jack.

"No, Jack," was the reply; "our knowledge as to the direction of the ocean currents is by no means complete. Indeed, as you will see from this map, the doctor has evidently found that in many instances the directions as marked on it are in error and has made side-notes calling attention to the fact. However, I believe, that generally speaking, one can rely on these directions. We can, therefore, form a fair idea of the route taken by our brig. I will show you on this chart the conclusions I have reached as to its probable route from the time it was abandoned until it wrecked our boat in the China Sea.

"You will remember," he continued, "that the brig was wrecked in the Pacific Ocean several hundred miles southwest of the southern extremity of South America. This would be about here," he said placing a finger on the open chart. "Of course you know that

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our brig, like all derelicts, has been carried from place to place mainly by the action of ocean currents, although of course the wind, especially when very strong, may have considerably altered her course. It is this action of the wind that makes it more difficult to determine its exact route, but since we may safely conclude that its direction has been influenced mainly by the currents, let us look at the chart and see the direction of the current in the part of the ocean in which the brig was wrecked.

“As you will see,” he continued, with his finger still on the map, “in the part of the ocean where the brig was wrecked, a broad current called the Antarctic Current flows from the Antarctic Ocean toward the northeast. A portion of this current flowing south of South America then turns toward the east under the name of the Cape Horn Current. The greater part, however, under the name of the Peruvian Current, flows up the coast of South America at a fairly considerable distance from the continent. I think there is no doubt that our brig was caught in the waters of the portion of the Antarctic Current that merges with the Peruvian Current; for if it had been caught by the Cape Horn Current it would have entered the Atlantic Ocean, in which it would probably have remained.”

“And then in what direction do you think the brig was carried?” exclaimed Harold, who was very much interested in what he heard.

“That, Harold,” was the reply, “would depend on

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how far to the north she was carried by the Peruvian Current. Since she was wrecked in the ocean off the southwestern coast of South America, she was probably caught by the eastern edge of this current and was, therefore, carried north almost to the Equator. If this were so, she would enter the North Equatorial Current of the Pacific near its northern edge, and might have been carried to some of the many islands off the northeastern coast of Australia. From the long time she has been in the water, however, I am disposed to think that, possibly by means of strong winds or storms, she afterward entered the Equatorial Counter Current of the Pacific by which she was carried to the east; how far I cannot say, but possibly to some point off the coast of Central America. Here she may again have been carried by a storm into the North Equatorial Current of the Pacific when she again drifted to the west.

"As you see," he continued, "the North Equatorial Current of the Pacific flows in vast whirls or eddies. In this way she may have been carried into the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific where she probably spent many months until, again carried by a storm to the North Equatorial Current of the Pacific, she continued to the west and finally reached the place where her path met ours, wrecking our boat and affording us refuge."

"Uncle," said Harold, "I see there are two of these whirls or eddies in the Pacific."

"Yes, Harold," was the reply; "you will also find

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them in each of the other central oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian."

"Have you any charts of the other oceans, captain?" inquired Jack, "so that we can see the position of these whirls."

"Yes," was the reply, and going to the chart-locker he brought two charts, one of the Atlantic and the other of the Indian Ocean, and spread them out on the table, pointing out to the boys these great whirls or elliptical movements in both oceans.

"Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "I see the words Sargasso Sea marked in the middle of these movements. What is a sargasso sea? You said you thought our brig was carried into the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific."

"Can you answer that question, Jack?" remarked the captain, who believed in encouraging boys to make themselves familiar with such information for the purpose of being able to answer such questions.

"It is a name given to an immense collection of seaweed in the Atlantic Ocean between Africa and North America. I did not know, however," he added, "that there was more than one sargasso sea."

"That is right," said the captain, "as to the definition. "The name Sargasso Sea was originally applied only to the region in the North Atlantic. When, however, it was discovered that similar accumulations of weeds existed in all the three central oceans—the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian—the name was applied to any place where this accumulation existed."

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“Is there much seaweed in the sargasso seas?” inquired Harold.

“Yes,” Harold, the amount is enormous. Take, for example, the Sargasso Sea in the North Atlantic. Here there are patches of weeds that have collected or grown so as to cover large portions of an area fully as large as the valley of the Mississippi. In some parts of this sea the weed is so dense that it looks from a distance as though one could walk on it. Columbus entered it during his first voyage and found the weeds so dense in places as markedly to retard the progress of his vessel. Indeed, his men were so alarmed that they believed they had reached the limits of navigation, and Columbus had difficulty in persuading them to continue the voyage.”

“Captain,” inquired Jack, “do you suppose the sargasso sea marked on the chart of the Pacific Ocean, north of the tropic of Capricorn, contains large quantities of seaweed.”

“Yes, Jack,” was the reply.

“I’d like to get into a sargasso sea, Uncle Arthur,” exclaimed Harold, “it must look very queer to see such quantities of seaweed.”

“In what ocean current are we now?” inquired Jack.

The captain, who had of course taken daily observations of the sun by means of the excellent instruments he found in the cabin, placed his hand on a certain portion of the chart and said:

“We are now floating in this current.”

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The boys looked at the name marked on the map of the Pacific and read the words Kuro Sivo.

"What do these words mean, uncle?" inquired Harold.

"They mean the 'Black Water.' "

"But," objected Harold, "the water of the ocean where we are is not black but is of a deep blue color. Jack and I have been talking about it during the last four or five days."

"It takes its name 'black water' from the depth of the blue color. It would be more correct to call it the 'deep blue water.' The name Kuro Sivo is a Japanese name. The current is frequently known as the Japan Current."

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## CHAPTER X

### A TALK ON OCEAN CURRENTS

THE captain's talk had greatly interested the boys. It contained so much information concerning strange things that they were eager to learn more, and seeing that he was apparently not very busy, they began urging him to give them some additional information.

"Captain," exclaimed Jack, "do these currents always flow in the same direction?"

"Practically so," was the reply. "It is for this reason that the regular currents are called constant ocean currents. You can always count on finding them."

"They're like great rivers in the ocean, aren't they?" exclaimed Harold.

"Yes," said the captain, "they resemble rivers, but are greatly larger and carry much more water than the greatest rivers of the earth."

"Larger than the Mississippi River?" inquired Harold.

"Vastly larger," was the reply. "The Gulf Stream, the name given to the ocean current that flows north-east off the coast of North America, carries, it has been estimated, an amount of water that is many thousand times greater than that of the Mississippi River."

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"Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "won't you please tell us what are the exact causes of ocean currents?"

"I wish I could, my lad," exclaimed the captain smiling, "but no one can do that. While the general peculiarities of ocean currents are fairly well known, all their exact causes are yet to be discovered. I can, however, tell you what are believed to be the general causes. Of course, any theory to be satisfactory must not only explain the causes that set the water in motion, but must also explain the directions of these motions. Now," he said, taking a book from one of the bookshelves and opening it at a full-page map, "here is a map of the world showing the directions of the ocean currents. Though smaller than the charts you have examined, yet it shows the three central oceans. I want you to examine it and tell me whether you can find any respects in which the directions of the currents are the same in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans."

"Here's one way in which they agree," exclaimed Harold. "In all of them the water near the Equator crosses the ocean from east to west."

"And," said Jack, "in all these oceans in the regions beyond the equator they cross the ocean from west to east."

"Where do these eastwardly flowing currents come from, Jack?" inquired the captain.

"Why," answered Jack, "when the westwardly flowing currents at the Equator reach the continents

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they begin moving toward the north and south and are finally again turned toward the east."

"Here's another way in which they agree," said Harold. "They all have the big whirligigs or merry-go-rounds inside of which the sargasso seas are located."

"Here's still another way in which they agree," said Jack. "In each of these oceans, currents flow from the Antarctic Ocean toward the northeast."

"Now," exclaimed the captain, "tell me some ways in which the currents in these oceans do not agree."

"There is an opposite current in the Pacific north of the Equator called the Equatorial Counter Current that moves across the ocean from west to east," said Harold.

"Jack," said the captain, "can you point to any other differences?"

"The currents in the North Atlantic," said Jack, "necessarily differ because that ocean is wide open to the Arctic. Again, in the Indian Ocean the current which flows from east to west is situated south of the Equator, while near the Equator in this ocean the current flows from west to east."

"That's very good, boys," exclaimed the captain. "You will notice that in the North Atlantic there is a current that enters the ocean from the north, that flows south along the eastern coast of Greenland, and continues along the eastern shores of North America inside of the Gulf Stream as a counter current; that is, a current flowing in the opposite direction to that of

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the Gulf Stream. This southwardly flowing current divides off the southern end of Greenland a part flowing up its western coast.

“Having now,” continued the captain, “seen the general directions of the ocean currents, let us see if we can find the force or forces that set them in motion. For my part, I think there can be no reasonable doubt that the principal cause of ocean currents is to be found in the difference of density of the waters due to the difference of temperature between the equatorial and the polar regions. The intense cold of the polar regions causes the polar waters as they lose their heat to become denser and sink to the bottom, thus forming a mountainous accumulation of dense, cold water. Of course this hill of water tends to spread out over the floor of the ocean and to flow as an undercurrent toward the Equator. This lowering of the level of the polar waters is believed to make the warmer equatorial waters move toward the poles, so that there is in this way a general movement of the equatorial waters set up toward the poles, and of the polar waters toward the Equator. Since these two currents are flowing in opposite directions, one must flow underneath the other. Of course it is the colder, denser water that is generally the undercurrent. When, however, these oppositely moving waters reach a shallow part of the ocean, the colder current rises to the surface deflecting or throwing the warmer current into the deeper regions. This is what happens along the eastern shores of the United States, where the current from the Arctic Ocean has

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become the surface current and has pushed the Gulf Stream into the deeper water of the ocean at a fairly considerable distance from the shores of North America."

"But, captain," said Jack, "while this difference of temperature would account for the general movement of the waters between the equatorial and the polar regions, yet it would not account for the directions that these currents take as marked on the map."

"You are right, Jack," was the reply, "so that in addition to this cause, which as you know is constantly acting, for the equatorial regions are always warmer than the polar regions, it is necessary to introduce other constantly acting causes, and these are the shapes of the ocean-beds and the rotation of the earth. As you know our earth is constantly turning or spinning on its axis from west to east. If our earth had no rotation on its axis the currents, except as turned out of their courses by the continents, would flow due north and south, but as the earth rotates, the currents are turned out of their course so that those from the Equator move toward the east while those from the poles move toward the west. Moreover, since the waters from the poles are unable to acquire the eastwardly motion of the earth, they reach the Equator with a less rapid motion than that of the earth, which, slipping from under them, causes them to cross the ocean from east to west."

It was evident that this explanation bothered both of the boys, especially Harold.

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"I can't understand that, Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold.

"Nor can I," exclaimed Jack. "It seems to me that if that was the explanation, the waters would really be moving toward the east although they were crossing the ocean toward the west."

"That's right," replied the captain, "and that's just what they do. For example, in the Pacific, which as you know is the widest ocean, by the time the waters reach its western border they have acquired more nearly the eastward motion of the earth and actually cross the ocean toward the east."

"Oh, I think I begin to understand it," said Jack. "Then that is what causes the Equatorial Counter Current in the Pacific."

"Correct," was the reply.

"But then," continued Jack, "should there not be similar currents in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans?"

"There should," said the captain, "and in point of fact there are currents that correspond to a certain extent with the Equatorial Counter Current of the Pacific. Do you understand that, Harold?" he continued turning to the lad.

"No, uncle, I am sorry to say that I do not," was the reply. "I guess it's too much for me. I'll have to wait until I get as old as Jack."

"Oh, I don't know," said the captain, "I think I can make it clear to you. Let me tell you a story that may help you. This story illustrates the danger of knowing only a little in science."

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“I’d like to hear the story, uncle, especially if it will help me to understand this thing.”

“All right, Harold, here’s the story. A man who did not learn until late in life about the rotation of the earth on its axis could hardly believe that it was turning rapidly enough toward the east to make one complete turn every twenty-four hours. He knew a little about science and was able to a certain extent to reason, and knowing that the earth was twenty-five thousand miles around at the Equator, he said to the person who assured him of its rotation :

“‘Why, I can’t believe that. If true, a point on the Equator would move toward the east at the rate of about one thousand and thirty-five miles an hour.’

“‘I can assure you, however,’ said his informer, ‘that it does so move, and that any educated person you inquire of will tell you that it does.’

“At last, becoming convinced of the fact, the man made as he believed, a wonderful invention, saying to himself :

“‘How strange it is that no one has ever thought of this before. By availing myself of this great natural principle I shall be able to travel as fast as if I owned the fabled seven-leagued boots. I will build a balloon, and rising high enough in the air not to be struck by the mountains as they move past, will wait until the earth flies beneath me at this wonderful rate. As soon as the part of the earth I wish to visit comes under me I will let the gas out of the balloon and descend.’”

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When Jack heard the story he laughed heartily and said:

“The man forgot that not only is the earth rapidly moving toward the east during its rotation, but that also all objects on it, including the atmosphere and the balloon itself, are moving just as fast, so that when he came down, except so far as he was blown out of his position by the wind, he simply landed on the spot from which he had ascended.”

“I understand that,” exclaimed Harold. “It is like when one is riding on a railroad train and jumps in the air from the floor of the car; the car doesn’t slip from under him, but moving as fast as he does causes him to strike the floor at the same spot from which he jumps.”

“Besides that,” said Jack who was still laughing, “even if the mountains didn’t strike him while he was descending, and supposing that the earth was slipping from under him, which of course it wasn’t doing, he could no more have safely landed on it than could Baron Munchausen do what he claimed to have done in the case of that wonderful yarn he spun concerning the cannon-balls.”

“I never heard that story, Jack,” exclaimed Harold. “Let me hear it.”

“Munchausen,” said Jack, “says that once, while on the ramparts of a walled town that was being attacked by the enemy with siege guns, wishing to obtain information of their numbers and disposition, adopted the expedient, which I believe he called a simple expe-

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dient, of standing near the muzzle of a huge gun just as it was about to be discharged, when, dexterously stepping on the ball as it came out of the gun, was carried with it over the enemy's camp. Having made the necessary observations, and being ready to return, he waited until he met a ball fired from the enemy toward the besieged town, and, again dexterously stepping on this ball, remained there until it reached the town when he again stepped from it and made his report to those in charge of the defense."

"That's a good yarn, Jack," exclaimed Harold; "you say he called this a simple device. It certainly was very simple."

"Well, Harold," inquired the captain, "do you think you can understand now somewhat better the cause of the Equatorial Counter Current and why the North and South Equatorial Currents move in a direction opposite to that of the earth's rotation?"

"Thank you, uncle," said Harold, "I think I understand it better than I did."

"I certainly understand it," remarked Jack. "Moreover, I see now why the Equatorial Currents on their movements toward the poles are deflected toward the east, for these waters having acquired the eastward motion of the earth in the equatorial regions are moving more rapidly toward the east than the earth is in the regions beyond the Equator. But what, sir," he continued, "causes the currents to return toward the Equator on the western side of the continent?"

"Jack," inquired the captain, "how big a hole do

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you think you could make in the waters of the ocean if you rapidly bailed the water out with a bucket and threw it to one side?"

"Why," exclaimed Jack, "do you think I'm as stupid as that, captain? I couldn't make any hole, try as hard as I might, for the water would rush in from all sides and fill it as fast as I could bail out the water."

"And yet," said the captain, "in the fact that you have just given me you will find the explanation you asked for. If the water did not flow in from some part of the ocean there would be a huge hole left on the western shores of the continent where the equatorial waters began moving from east to west."

"Thank you, captain," said Jack. "I think I now understand fairly well the causes of ocean currents."

"And so do I," said Harold. "But I say, uncle," he continued, "do I understand that the bottom of the ocean, even at the Equator, is covered by a layer of very cold water?"

"Yes, Harold, that's right."

"Then if you lowered anything deep enough into the water it would be made cold."

"It would," replied his uncle laughing. "I know that when vessels are becalmed at the Equator and the ice supply is limited, the officers sometimes lower their bottles to great depths and find on bringing them to the surface, after some time, that they are almost as cold as if they had been placed on ice."

"That's a jolly idea," said Harold.

"But, boys," said the captain, "you must not think

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that the differences of temperature between the Equator and the poles are the only cause of constant currents in the ocean. Lieutenant Maury and others are disposed to think that the differences of density between the waters of the Equator and of the poles, caused by the greater evaporation at the Equator, would also result in setting up currents between these two parts of the earth. It is difficult to see how these opposite causes, the decrease in density produced by expansion and the increase in density caused by evaporation, could fail to antagonize each other so that the resulting currents would be those due to the differences of the actions and not to their sum. This part, however, of the causes of ocean currents is too difficult to take up with you now.

“Another explanation of ocean currents,” he continued, “finds their cause in the wind. Without going into this theory, I will say that while there can be no doubt that the winds are of great importance in many cases in aiding ocean currents by causing a drift of the water in the direction in which they are flowing, yet they cannot be regarded as the sole cause. Besides, if the winds make the surface currents what is it that causes either the counter or the undercurrents?”

“Captain,” remarked Jack, “I believe the Gulf Stream was the first ocean current studied by scientific men, was it not?”

“Yes, Jack,” was the reply, “I remember reading a statement made by an early writer that the Mississippi River was the ‘Father of the Gulf Stream’; that

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it was the water discharged by this river that caused the Gulf Stream, and its velocity could therefore be computed from the velocity of the river. Captain Livingston showed the incorrectness of this explanation by a calculation which demonstrated that at least three thousand times more water escaped from the Gulf of Mexico through the Gulf Stream than is emptied into it by the Mississippi River. Moreover, instead of being fresher than the rest of the waters of the ocean, the waters of the Gulf Stream are much saltier and have the same deep blue color we see in the waters of the Kuro Sivo, or the Japan Current, through which we are now moving. It is well known at the salt works in France and along the shores of the Adriatic, where sea-water is led into vats or shallow pools on the coast and exposed to evaporation by the sun's heat, that the longer the water evaporates and the saltier it grows, the deeper becomes its blue color. When the salts it contains are about to crystallize it takes on a reddish tint. The waters of the Gulf Stream, even as far north as the Carolina coasts, are of so deep an indigo blue that one can easily see where they pass through the ordinary sea-water. Indeed, so sharp is this line that a vessel can sometimes be seen to be floating one-half in the waters of the Gulf Stream and the other half in the ordinary waters of the ocean."

"Uncle," inquired Harold, "are ocean currents of any use besides the carrying of vessels with them as well as derelicts that smash things when they strike them?"

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“Yes, Harold,” was the reply, “they are of much use. Besides the aid they afford in the navigation of sailing vessels, for steamers make comparatively little use of ocean currents, they greatly modify the extremes of the earth’s climate, that is, they cause the equatorial regions to be much less hot, and the polar regions to be much less cold, than they would otherwise be. Of course, you can understand that, since, as soon as the waters at the poles become cold they flow toward the equatorial region, and as soon as the waters at the Equator become heated they move toward the poles, the climate of both of these regions is rendered less severe—the polar waters cooling the equatorial regions and the equatorial waters heating the polar regions.”

“I can understand that,” exclaimed Harold, “it’s a sort of a swap or trade, isn’t it. The equatorial regions have more heat than they want and the polar regions more cold than they want, so they swap even and thus make the climate less severe.”

“That’s an excellent illustration, Harold,” said his uncle. “I guess, boys, we have had enough of ocean currents. You had better go out on the deck now and I’ll finish my reading.”

## CHAPTER XI

### A STEAMER SIGHTED. THE NEW OVERCOATS

It must not be supposed that Captain Harding and his three companions had planned to spend an indefinite time on the brig. It is true they had given much thought to making themselves comfortable, but at the same time they had not failed to make every effort to speak with any vessel they might meet. As soon as they had found some lanterns among the stores of the brig they placed them on the bow and stern of the vessel in order not only to make their presence known to any passing vessel, but also as to indicate the direction in which they were moving. These lights were placed as follows: a green light on the starboard side of the vessel and a red light on the port side. They also displayed distress signals, consisting of a square flag with a circle above it, but having no masts on the brig they had difficulty in properly flying it. For the same reason they were unable to display the usual white light on the mast-head and were obliged to replace it by a light at the end of the bowsprit.

Thus far they had sighted several vessels, but all of these had been at such a distance that the presence of the brig apparently had not been observed, and no chance was afforded of speaking to them. On one occasion, however, Hiram, who had been on duty as

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lookout, had been scanning the sea with field-glasses, caught sight of a column of smoke on the horizon which he believed was coming from the smokestack of a steamer. He therefore reported at once to the captain, saying :

“ A column of smoke kin be seen ahead over our bows, sir. I think it be the smoke of a steamer.”

The captain, who was in the cabin, went immediately on deck and, turning his glass to the distant object, said :

“ Too far off to be certain, Hiram, although I think it is the smoke of a steamer. If she is heading this way we will soon know for sure.”

About an hour later the captain said :

“ You are right, Hiram, it is a steamer. I can ju:t make her out. Here,” he continued, “ take my glasses for a moment. They are very powerful.”

Hiram took the glasses and after looking for a while, said :

“ It’s a steamer all right, cap’in, and she’s headin’ straight fer us.”

“ Then I may soon be in Japan,” said Harold exultingly, “ and see father and mother.”

“ Yes, Harold,” said the captain, “ if the steamer takes the trouble to speak to us and send off a boat.”

“ Why, captain,” said Jack, “ you surely don’t think that any vessel would fail to send help to a boat in distress like ours?”

“ What do you say to that, Hiram?” asked the captain, not answering Jack directly.

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"I hev known it to be done, sir," was the reply; "though, uv course, not ef the cap'in be the right sort of a man."

They had been looking so intently all this time in the direction of the approaching steamer that they had entirely failed to observe the opposite direction, or that immediately over the vessel's stern. At last Jack, who happened to look in this direction, was surprised at the angry appearance of the sky. A severe storm was evidently rising rapidly.

"Captain," he cried excitedly, "look over the stern. A heavy squall is rising!"

"Yes, and more'n a squall," said Hiram, not waiting for the captain to answer. "I guess ye might call it a storm."

"Yes," replied the captain, as if in answer to both Jack and Hiram; "and a heavy storm too."

"Do you think it will strike us before we speak the steamer?" inquired Harold anxiously.

"I fear so," answered the captain. "What do you think, Hiram?"

"I think that 'ere storm will strike us long afore the steamer gits here."

"Well, Hiram," said the captain, "we have no sails to reef, but we must cover all the hatchways and close the portholes, and the doors and the windows of the cabin and the chartroom."

This was soon done. All remained on deck watching the approaching storm. The barometer was low and rapidly falling. As both the captain and Hiram

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had predicted the storm rose rapidly. The entire heavens were soon overcast and a heavy rain began to fall, which so narrowed the view that the sight of the steamer was soon lost. They were careful to see that their lights were burning. The sea rose so rapidly that the deck was occasionally washed by the waves. The storm continued for fully six hours when it ceased almost as rapidly as it had risen, literally blowing itself out. Of course, the first thing they did was to scan the horizon in all directions with their glasses for the steamer, but she was nowhere to be seen.

"Well," said Harold sorrowfully, "we won't be helped by that ship."

"No," said Jack, "but perhaps another will come before long."

The captain did not say anything but continued scanning the horizon with his glasses to see if some faint traces of the steamer's smoke might not be seen. Failing to discover any traces he went into the cabin leaving Hiram and the two boys on deck.

"Hiram," said Jack, "I suppose of course you are very sorry that the steamer has passed us?"

Now Jack did not for a moment believe that Hiram would make any other answer than that of course he was sorry—that probably before long another vessel would be seen when they would have better luck. He was, therefore, greatly surprised when Hiram turned to him and said:

"Not I, Mr. Jack. On the contraree, I'm mighty glad she missed us."

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“Why, Hiram,” exclaimed Jack, “you surprise me! If we were on the steamer we would be safe and would have a good chance of reaching land, but here we don’t know what may happen.”

“Now, Mr. Jack,” exclaimed Hiram, “I’m mighty glad ye asked me that ‘ere question, fer the cap’in and me don’t agree on it. Ye see it’s jest this way. This here bark hez a waluble cargo and so would make mighty good salwage. Now ef we remain on her we ought to manage somehow er other to take her into some port, when we could each of us make a pile of money. On t’other hand, ef the steamer should hev took us, if I onderstand the matter right, it wouldn’t be us that could get this salwage; it would be the steamer. Now the cap’in agrees with me that there be a’most no chances that the brig would founder even in heavy weather, and thet ef we kep long enuff on her we might think out some plan fer takin’ her into port. But cap’in won’t do this sence, as he says, the lives of you two boys hev been placed in his charge, and he ain’t goin’ to let the chance of makin’ money stand in the way of your getting home. Uv course, I don’t blame him fer this, and stand ready to do all I kin to help him. Consequently, I’ll do the straight and treu thing and help him to draw the attention of any passing vessel to us, though I’m free to confess I ain’t hankering to be took off this here brig.”

“Well, Hiram,” said Jack, when he had finished speaking, “I’m sure I can’t blame you for feeling as you do. As for me,” he said sorrowfully, “you know

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I've recently lost both father and mother, so it makes little difference where I am. But for Harold's sake," he continued, "I certainly hope a vessel will pick us up before long."

"Oh, yes," said Harold, "let us try our best to speak some passing vessel and get aboard of her. Although," he added in a philosophical manner, "if we can't get off, the brig is an all-right place to be on, and we'll have jolly times seeing the different parts of the Pacific. Why, it's like having a private yacht and being taken on it to see the different sights of the ocean, and at the same time learning lots about scientific things from Uncle Arthur. I say, Jack," he continued, "wouldn't you like to see more of the mysteries of this great ocean and hear Uncle Arthur spin us yarns out of those books in the library, and show us how to use the scientific instruments in the cabin?"

"I would indeed, Harold," was the reply. "Whether we are taken from the brig or not I shall be very happy as long as I can remain with the captain and with you."

"Hurrah, my lads!" exclaimed Hiram, "it's glad I am to hear ye talk that way. Nevertheless, notwithstanding, don't forgit that Hiram Higgenbotham stands ready and treu to do all he kin to git ye off this brig, salwage or no salwage."

The first opportunity Jack had of doing so privately he gave the captain in full the conversation he had with Hiram.

"Yes, I know, Jack," replied the captain, "Hiram

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and I have talked the matter over several times. Now, I don't blame him for feeling this way. Indeed, were it not for you and Harold, especially Harold, who is my brother's son, I would never for a moment think of endeavoring to attract the attention of a passing vessel, but would take my chance of finding some means for getting the brig into port and thus making a pile of money. But, should I do this, and anything should happen to Harold, I would be ashamed to look my brother in the face, for it would show that I cared more for making money than I did for the lad's safety. Nor could I look his mother in the face after I had kept her so long in suspense as to the safety of her boy. No, Jack," he continued, "I am making every effort to speak with any vessel we may meet so as to reach the nearest port and thus get word to Yokohama, by telegraph, to let them know that we are safe and are on our way home."

"Well, captain," said Jack, "let me say, as I said to Hiram, that were it not for the natural wish of Harold to return home as soon as possible to see his father and mother, I would be just as well pleased to remain on the brig with you as I would to get on another vessel. We are safe here, and since I have neither father nor mother and no home to go to except that which Harold's people have kindly offered me, I would be just as happy here as I would anywhere else. "Indeed," he added affectionately, "since I have known you, captain, I have grown to like you almost as much as if you were my father. Say we go on another

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vessel and I reach Japan, what would I do? why, go on studying for several years longer. Now here," he said, "with you as a teacher, with this splendid library of books, and these magnificent physical instruments, and the whole Pacific Ocean to study, where could I find a better school? Besides, what is better than all, I would be with you," he continued affectionately, "and that would satisfy me if there was nothing else."

"Is that the way you feel, Jack?" said the captain. "I am indeed glad to know that you are beginning to care for me. Let me tell you, Jack, that I have gone on much further with you than that. I have loved you from almost the first time I saw you. I have no boy of my own, and I've often thought how glad I would be if I had you in place of a son."

"It makes me very happy to hear you say this," cried Jack, putting his arms around the captain's neck and kissing him. "I have loved you for a long time, and now I feel more closely drawn to you than ever."

After this conversation Jack was to be found more frequently in the cabin either reading books or talking to the captain. It must not be supposed, however, that he kept away from Harold. On the contrary, the boys were much together playing with the dog and parrot, and teaching them tricks. Harold too, who had become much interested in physical science, frequently joined Jack in the library in reading or talking with his uncle. It is just possible that one reason Jack confined his reading to scientific books was that there was no other kind in the captain's library. How-

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ever, he did read them and, as we have already said, became greatly interested in the things they contained.

One day when Jack and Harold, leaving Hiram on deck, had gone into the cabin, they found the captain with a pair of large tailor shears in his hand, apparently about to cut one of the new blankets they had found among the stores and which he had spread out on the top of the table.

"Why, Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "what are you doing? Are you going to try your hand at tailoring?"

"Yes, Harold," was the reply, and then turning to Jack he added, "Jack, do you know how to sew?"

"I can't say that I do, sir," was the reply. "I think I could manage to take stitches that would hold pieces of cloth together; but why do you ask?"

"I intend trying to make some of these blankets into overcoats. We didn't bring heavy clothing in our boat, so I must try to make these blankets into overcoats. I can't promise what the fit will be, but I am sure of one thing—they will be warm."

"Making overcoats for us, uncle," exclaimed Harold in surprise. "Why, except in the early mornings and evenings, it is so warm that Jack and I have been glad to leave our coats and vests off and even roll up our shirt-sleeves."

"That's all very well now, Harold," replied his uncle laughing, "but the Japan Current is every day carrying us farther north. We are now in latitude 42° N. Before long we shall reach a part of the world

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where the climate will be colder, and although in the Northern Pacific the temperature is seldom very low, as the water of the Japan Current still retains much heat, yet at times the air is cold enough to make overcoats quite comfortable. We might, indeed, be carried by the currents into latitudes as high as 60° N., where the air is often very cold. We must therefore get ready, as far as we can, to keep ourselves comfortably warm under such circumstances."

"Do you think, captain," inquired Jack, "that the currents may carry us as far as 60° N.?"

"I don't believe they will, Jack," was the reply, "but I think we will almost certainly get as far as 50° N. It is now late in August and snow-squalls, indeed, even snow-storms, are common in these latitudes. Moreover, the winds in these parts of the ocean are very boisterous, so that we should be very uncomfortable without heavy clothing. It is for this reason that I asked you whether you could sew. And for the same reason I would like to know whether you can sew, Harold."

"I can take some kind of stitches, uncle," replied Harold. "But if it comes to sewing, why don't you ask Hiram to help you. He can sew all right. You ought to have seen him make this patch in my trousers the other day when I tore them while playing with Rompey," showing the captain a well-made patch.

"That's an excellent thought," said the captain. "Go and ask Hiram to come here."

Harold ran on deck to Hiram and said:

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"I say, Hiram, the captain says please come into the cabin and bring some thread and needles with you. He has a piece of sewing he wants you to help him do."

"Now, Mr. Harold," said Hiram laughing, "I know you are jollying me. Captain Harding don't sew, en I ain't goin' to him and hev him laugh at me fer believing such a cock-and-bull story."

"Indeed, Hiram," said Harold, "I'm not kidding you. Upon my honor as a gentleman," he added gravely, employing a phrase common in English schools when a boy endeavors to prove the truth of what he is saying by pledging his word on the honor of a gentleman.

"Wall, Mr. Harold, ef ye kin tell me treu that the cap'in wants to sew, of course I'll obey orders and go and help him."

Harold then explained about the overcoats and blankets, and the captain's reasons for thinking they would need them.

"I understand ye now, Mr. Harold. Wait a moment till I git my thread and needles and I'll go with ye to the kebin."

When he saw the captain, Hiram exclaimed:

"I axes ye to scuse me, cap'in, fer not comin' immediate'. I feered Mr. Harold wuz foolin' me. What kin I do fer ye, sir?"

"Harold tells me you can sew. Is this right?"

"I allow I kin, cap'in," said Hiram laughing.

"Do you think you could make overcoats for all of us out of these blankets?"

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“I sartinly kin,” replied Hiram. “I kin make a whole suit of clothes. How do ye like the fit of the clothes I hev on?”

“They are a splendid fit, Hiram,” said the captain. “The boys and I have often remarked how wonderfully well your clothes fit, and how much better they look than those worn by the rest of the sailors.”

Hiram was evidently pleased with this statement.

“Wall, I’ll tell ye treu,” he said, “I made this hull suit of clothes meself. I don’t seem to want ez much sleep ez most of the sailors, so I hev so much time at sea thet I manage to make my own clothes besides doing other little odd jobs.”

“Then, Hiram,” said the captain, much pleased at what he had heard, “you are the man we want. As you know, we are rapidly approaching the Aleutian Island Chain, and while the weather there is never severely cold, yet snow-squalls are common, with strong gales. We shall therefore soon need warmer clothing. I suppose overcoats could be made for us out of these blankets, do you not think so?”

“Easy, sir,” was the reply; “but if ye air in a hurry fer these coats ye must all turn in and take a hand at sewing. Suppose I make the first coat fer Mr. Harold.”

“All right,” said Harold, “begin with me.”

“Do ye want eny particular style, Mr. Harold?” asked Hiram in a joking tone.

“Make it a reefer, please, Hiram,” said Harold.

“You mean them kind of overcoats wot comes in

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two thicknesses in front when buttoned up?" inquired Hiram.

"That's the kind," said Harold.

"Very well," was the reply, "I kin make ye one of them easy, fer ef it don't fit as snug as it orter we kin move the buttons back so ez to take in more of the cloth. Which one of them blankets do ye choose fer yer coat?" he added smiling.

It is no wonder that Hiram smiled, for the blankets provided for sale at the mines had apparently been picked out on the plan that the brighter and gaudier the colors the better they would sell—a belief probably founded on experience. The four blankets the captain had selected contained wide stripes of the most brilliant colors—greens, yellows, blues, and reds predominating—between each of which alternate stripes of colors had been quite ingeniously contrasted so far as bad taste was concerned.

"Come, Jack," said Harold laughing, "help me pick out the least ugly of those blankets so that I won't have a regular Joseph's coat."

"I don't think it will make much difference, Harold, which you choose," said Jack. "You can't help getting an awfully ugly cloth."

"All right," said Harold laughing. "Make my overcoat from this blanket, Hiram," he said pointing to a blanket with a red ground with broad blue and green stripes, alternating with narrow yellow and white stripes.

"Very well, Mr. Harold," replied Hiram, "thet'll

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make a stunning coat for sartin. Stand up here and I'll measure ye."

Hiram's method of measuring was so original that neither the captain nor Jack believed the fit would be much of a success. When ready for trying on, however, they were surprised what an excellent fit it was. They had no little difficulty in finding buttons for the coat, but at last solved the problem by selecting several gross of the most gorgeous large-sized buttons intended for ladies' coats. They were, moreover, made in the form of cheap imitation jewelry, set with pieces of colored glass intended to resemble diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones. Indeed, when Harold put on his overcoat, although it proved a splendid fit, he looked more as if he was dressed for a comic opera, or as if he had given up all idea of remaining an honest lad and had determined to become a pirate.

It required hard continuous work for many days before all their coats were fitted on and completed. At first the sewing was very clumsily done. The needles were more frequently stuck into their fingers than into the coats. At last, however, learning by experience that it was easier to take aim so that the needles would pass through the cloth without first passing through a portion of their flesh, the process became more pleasant and at last they succeeded in becoming fairly good sewers. For want of other material Hiram had employed portions of the highly colored printed muslins for lining material, so that the overcoats looked indeed

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stunning as Hiram had predicted, even when turned inside out, while, with the blanket side out, buttoned up with their magnificent jewelry buttons, they were truly astonishing to behold.

“We look more like walking rainbows, or like savages than civilized people,” suggested Jack.

The overcoats were not made any too soon. A few days after their completion they struck a snow-squall accompanied by a furious gale of wind which, blowing the snow into their faces and against their bodies, rendered the use of warmer clothing very necessary. In a short time the deck was covered with two inches of snow. It did not remain long, for the sun soon came out rapidly melting it and left the deck dry.

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## CHAPTER XII

### OFF THE SHORES OF THE ALEUTIAN ISLAND CHAIN

IF Hiram found time hanging heavily on his hands on the different vessels on which he had served either as a common sailor or as a boatswain, he found it especially so on the brig where there were no sails to be attended to. It is true he had of his own choice taken charge of the cooking, and of course spent much of his time in keeping the brig tidy. These duties would have occupied nearly all of his time had they not been equally shared in, not only by the boys but by the captain also, who knew that some regular everyday work was necessary to insure the continuance of their health and happiness. He had therefore encouraged the boys to busy themselves in the ordinary duties about the ship and had laid out regular work for each day. After breakfast, which was at four bells, or six A. M., they all turned in, including the captain, and cleaned up. Dinner was at eight bells, or at noon, and supper at four bells, or at six P. M. A regular watch was kept as is usual with merchant vessels on the sea, only here the watch consisted of a single member of the crew. The expedient of the dog-watches was adopted, as already explained, in order to prevent the same watch always falling on the same person.

The ordinary duties of the ship left the boys plenty

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of time on their hands. Besides playing with Rompey and teaching him new tricks, which the wonderful intelligence of the animal made easy work, they amused themselves by increasing Satan's conversational powers. Then too, the books in the library always enabled them to spend a pleasant time either in quietly reading or in talking them over with the captain. Besides this the captain set aside sufficient time every day for giving them instruction on the many phenomena that were daily occurring on the ocean. Hiram, whose education did not so readily permit intellectual employment, generally managed to spend his spare time in various bits of mechanical work. For example, he had cleaned off a portion of the deck, and had so arranged it in connection with tubes that after the deck had been thoroughly flushed by a heavy rain he could lead the rain-water through the tubes into the water tanks below and thus keep up their fresh-water supply.

One day, after the breakfast things had been cleaned up, Hiram said to the captain:

“Captain, I hev been o'erhaulin' the life-buoys and find them all right. Now while a life-buoy is mighty handy to hev around should a feller happen to fall overboard when there is some one on deck to chuck it arter him, yet ef no one is thar to heave it, it ain't of eny use. I've been a-thinkin' that you might perhaps like to help me make life-belts for each of us. A feller can't always keep near a life-buoy when there's chances of his being swept overboard, but he kin keep on a

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life-belt during sech times. What do ye think, cap'in, of this idee?"

"It's admirable, Hiram," was the reply. "We certainly should have life-belts. Let's get to work at them now. What will you line them with?" he continued.

"Wall, I reckon the cork we have on board is the best thing we kin use. I'd prefer sheets of rubber for making air-belts, but we ain't got no rubber."

"All right, Hiram, let's get some cork out of the cargo. As soon as it is dried I will cover it with some rubber varnish I have in the cabin in order to prevent it from absorbing water and thus decreasing its floating power."

"I've hed this idee in my head fer some time," said Hiram, "and hev a lot of cork out'n the hold wot's been dryin' fer several days."

"Very well, then," said the captain, "I'll get the varnish. What material will you use for making the belts? I guess we can't get any better material than a piece of strong sailcloth."

"Yes, I hev put some aside fer that purpose," said Hiram.

All hands were soon busily engaged in making life-belts. Each belt consisted of a strip of cloth wide enough, when doubled together throughout its length, to hold the varnished pieces of cork, which were then firmly held in place by stitches passed through the sailcloth. The needles employed were sail-needles threaded with strong twine, both of which Hiram had obtained from the boatswain's locker found on the

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brig. Besides being buttoned together when fastened around the waist of the wearer, they were strongly tied by ends of thin ropes firmly secured to the canvas. When so made, life-belts placed around the body immediately under the armpits, are capable of keeping the body in an upright position in the water.

But an undertaking that required much thought and work was something to take the place of the open boat in which they had left the Ketrel, and which had been wrecked on unexpectedly meeting the brig. Both the captain and Hiram were constantly regretting its loss. All the boats had been taken from the brig by its crew when the vessel was abandoned off the shores of South America. One day while he was rearranging the stores Hiram was greatly rejoiced to find a number of oar-locks together with two pairs of oars in good condition. At once informing the captain of this important discovery, he remarked:

“Cap’in, it ‘pears to me that we could build something that could be used for a life-boat. We hev nothing to stand off in from the brig fer a short distance should we need to pick something up out’n the water. Now I kin pick some lumber out of the hold en, by putting our heads together, we kin build something wot’ll do for a boat. What do ye think of this idee, cap’in; shall we try it?”

“We certainly will,” replied the captain. “It’s a splendid idea,” he continued enthusiastically. “Come into the cabin and we’ll plan the boat.”

After much thought and argument it was determined

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to build a boat somewhat after the model of a ship's whaleboat, in which the inclination or flare of the boat is the same at the bow as at the stern. The boat they planned was twelve feet fore and aft, and fairly wide athwart, that is to say, it was twelve feet in length and fairly wide from side to side. Instead of leaving lockers at the bow and stern for the reception of articles, these portions were made airtight, thus rendering it impossible to sink the boat. Besides this, buoys were formed of canvas filled with varnished cork shavings and placed along the sides of the boat. The boat took several weeks to complete. Hiram feared he would have considerable difficulty in obtaining wood for the boat that was not water-logged. Fortunately the boards had been treated with chemicals to prevent them from rotting, these chemicals being of such a nature as to prevent the entrance of water, a fact, as the captain pointed out, which greatly increased the buoyancy of the brig.

When completed the boat was suspended on the davits at the stern and rigged up with the necessary tackle for letting it down into and taking it out of the water.

As has already been remarked, Hiram was a skilful carpenter and joiner. He had picked up considerable knowledge of ship carpentry while at sea. The boat, therefore, when completed, was far from being the clumsy contrivance it would have been had its builders had no experience in this direction. They had no difficulty in rowing it much more rapidly than the brig was drifting. It was agreed, however, that unless it be-

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came necessary to abandon the brig, the boat should never be used at one time by all the crew. That one, or preferably two, should always be left on the brig; that, moreover, the boat should never be permitted to be taken beyond easy hailing distance of the brig.

As they drifted farther and farther north fogs became more common until at last the foggy weather was the rule and not the exception. These fogs were so dense that it was impossible to see farther than a few hundred yards from the vessel. Occasionally, however, the fogs would lift and the air clear, thus permitting them to see the distant horizon. One day when they were in the neighborhood of latitude 50° N. the fog temporarily lifted, when they saw on the larboard, or left-hand side of the brig as they stood facing the bow, a long chain of islands extending from east to west. Although they were at some considerable distance from them, yet the air happened then to be quite clear and the sun brightly shining, so that they could see by the use of the glasses that the islands were quite mountainous.

"What islands are those, captain?" inquired Jack.

"The Aleutian Island Chain," was the reply.

By the use of the powerful glasses formerly belonging to Doctor Parsons they could see that the mountains extended generally in the direction of the islands. The highest peaks were covered with snow, and although their slopes were entirely devoid of forests, yet they were covered with a wonderfully rich golden carpet of peat moss formed of the sphagnum, while

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their stony bluffs were almost hidden by chocolate-brown and reddish-colored lichens.

It was so beautiful a sight that it strongly impressed itself on their memories. Though the waters were of a less deep blue than those of the Kuro Sivo, which they had now left some time ago, they were of a light blue that contrasted magnificently with the mountains, so that the bright sunlight, which was then momentarily lighting up their slopes, caused the snow-clad summits and the many colored slopes to contrast beautifully with the blue in the water and the sky as a background.

"Will we pass near the islands, Uncle Arthur?" inquired Harold anxiously.

"I hope not," was the reply. "Rough water with strong winds from the south would make dangerous sailing for the brig. As you know, we cannot steer her and the waters off the islands are dangerous from the presence of numerous rocky islets. However, I do not think there is much danger unless the winds from the south increase sufficiently to carry us out of the current in which we are drifting. Can you tell me the name of this current, Harold?" he continued.

"Yes, uncle, it is called the North Pacific Current."

They remained on deck as long as the air continued clear. As soon as the fog again settled, which occurred in about half an hour, the captain said to the boys:

"Come into the cabin and I'll tell you something about the Aleutian Island Chain. Won't you come with the boys, Hiram?" he added.

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"Thank ye, sir," was the reply. "I reckon I'd better remain on deck. I may cum arter a while."

Selecting from among the many charts of the doctor's a splendid map of the Aleutian Island Chain, the captain said :

"This chain consists of the summits of several submerged or sunken mountain chains that extend from the southwestern end of the Peninsula of Alaska on the continent of North America, to the Peninsula of Kam-schatka on the continent of Asia, over a distance of approximately sixteen hundred and fifty miles. The island chain lies in a portion of the Pacific that is characterized by marked volcanic phenomena. According to Dana there are some twenty-one volcanoes in the chain."

"Are any of these volcanoes active?" inquired Jack.

"Yes," replied the captain. "If the fog permits before we are out of this part of the ocean we may get near enough to the islands to see the smoke rising from the peaks of some of the active volcanoes."

"O uncle," cried Harold eagerly, "do you think we'll see a volcanic eruption?"

"I hope not," was the reply.

"Why not? The ashes or lava could not hurt us on the brig, could they?"

"There's no danger from the lava," was the reply; "but if we were very near, the ashes might set the deck on fire. The principal danger would come from the huge waves that are sometimes formed in the ocean during the earthquake shocks that so commonly ac-

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company volcanic eruptions. Such waves might easily wreck the brig, or might even carry her on one of the islands and leave her considerably above the level of the water."

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "just as you told us the earthquake waves did that were produced by the great eruption of Krakatoa in 1883."

"I should like to feel an earthquake shock," said Harold, and then observing that his uncle and Jack were laughing at him, he added: "Of course I mean a little shock that wouldn't hurt us."

"Well," said Jack, "so would I, provided it was not too powerful. I don't think the waves would be apt to be very high here," he continued; "would they, captain? I understand that such waves are only dangerously high in very shallow water."

"No, Jack, it is not probable that the waves would hurt us here," was the reply. "I hardly think the waters in which we are now are shallow enough to make the waves from an ordinary earthquake shock dangerous. But let me tell you something about these islands.

"As you can see from this map," continued the captain, pointing to the chart of the Aleutian Island Chain spread out on the table, "the islands sweep in a somewhat curved line between North America and Asia. The easternmost island, called Oonimak, is one of the largest in the chain. It has two volcanic peaks, the highest of which is known as Shishaldin. This peak, although only a little over eight thousand feet in height,

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nevertheless forms a conspicuous object, since it rises so abruptly from the ocean that the waves strike directly against its precipitous slopes. That it is an active volcano can be seen from the column of smoke which pours sluggishly from its crater. The other volcanic peak on Oonimak is called Pogromnia.

“To the west of Oonimak there is a small island known as Akootan. The Strait of Oonimak, which lies between these two islands forms the principal route for all sailing vessels plying between North American ports and the Behring Sea which, you remember, lies north of the Aleutian Island Chain.”

“Captain,” inquired Jack, “when a snow-covered volcanic mountain becomes active of course the snow on its slopes melts. Is this melting ever sufficiently rapid to cause floods?”

“Yes, Jack,” was the reply, “almost invariably the snow melts so rapidly that floods are formed which rush violently down the slopes of the mountain causing great damage.

“It appears,” continued the captain, “that there was a violent eruption of Pogromnia in 1820, and that since this time streams of lava have been thrown out from the portions of the island near its western end. I will read you the following description of one of these eruptions given by Bishop Veniaminov:

“‘On the tenth of March, 1825, after a prolonged subterranean noise resembling a heavy cannonade that was plainly heard on the islands of Oonalashka, Akoon, and the southern end of the Aliaska Peninsula, a low

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ridge at the northwestern end of Oonimak opened in five places with violent emissions of flames and great masses of black ashes, covering the country for miles around; the ice and snow on the mountain-tops melted and descended in a terrific torrent five to ten miles in width on the eastern side of the island. The Shishaldin crater, which up to that time had also emitted flames, continued to smoke only.'

"The island of Oonimak," continued the captain, "appears to be a center of volcanic activity. It was at one time one of the most densely populated of the Aleutian Island Chain. But it has not been inhabited since 1847. This, however, although partially due to ravages caused by volcanoes and earthquakes, was mainly due to the outrageous treatment of the inhabitants by the early Russian traders, as well as by a terrible scourge of smallpox that nearly removed all the remaining inhabitants."

"Do I understand you, uncle," said Harold, "that no one ever visits this island?"

"I did not intend to give you that idea, Harold," was the reply. "On the contrary, the island is visited occasionally by the inhabitants of neighboring islands in order to obtain a variety of hardened lava called obsidian, a material so closely resembling glass that it is sometimes called volcanic glass. This lava breaks into pieces with sharp knife-like edges and is highly prized by the Aleuts for knives. It is also used for tipping the ends of their spears and arrows. They also visit the island of Oonimak for the sulphur and brim-

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stone that collect in crevices on the slopes of the volcanoes."

"What do they do with brimstone?" inquired Harold.

"They use it in starting their fires."

"Do you mean that they make matches with the brimstone?" asked Harold.

"Not exactly," was the reply, "they use it in the following manner. A layer of dried moss or dried eiderdown is spread over the surface of some hard flinty rock over which they sprinkle powdered sulphur. They then get a piece of stone they call a fire-stone, consisting of a mineral known as quartzite, a hard quartz rock, and strike it with powerful blows against the rock. The sparks of fire thus produced ignite the brimstone and the moss or feathers on which it rests and start the fire."

"This is worth remembering, Jack," exclaimed Harold. "Should the brig be wrecked and we are cast on an island containing sulphur we might start a fire in this manner."

"We might," said Jack, "if we knew where to find quartzite, and knew it when we saw it."

"Oh, well," replied Harold, "we must learn. I know sulphur or brimstone when I see it, and that's something to begin with."

"The next largest island to the west of Oonimak," continued the captain, "is Oonalashka. This island has a fairly dense population. The principal village or town has the same name as the island. At this village

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the principal trading of the island is carried on. At one time this trade consisted in the valuable sea-otter skins. I will not stop now to describe to you the general appearance of the sea-otter as you may possibly see one of these animals before we leave this district. It is also on Oonalashka that deposits of red and yellow ocher—varieties of iron ore—are found which are highly prized as paints or pigments for the ornamentation of glass or stonework. The active volcano of Makooshin is situated on this island.

“Without stopping to describe,” continued the captain, “the many other interesting islands which lie west of Oonalashka, we come at last to the westernmost island of the chain, the island of Attoo. This island, lying as it does nearest the mainland of Asia, was the first island of the chain visited by the Russians, it being discovered by Michael Novodiskov. At the time of his visit the island was populated by numerous Aleuts who possessed a large quantity of sea-otter skins. Now, owing to the practical extermination of the otters, or at least to the animals being driven from the coasts, the inhabitants finding their occupation of hunting the sea-otter gone, have greatly decreased in numbers, obtaining a bare living from the fishing of cod, halibut, algæ mackerel, and salmon. Fortunately for these people the Japan Current brings considerable drift timber on their coasts.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN THE WRACK OR FLOATING KELP-MASSES OF THE NORTH PACIFIC

IT will be remembered that Hiram was an inveterate smoker. Long ago both he and the captain had used up all the tobacco they had brought with them from the ship. Hiram greatly felt the want of tobacco with which to fill his pipe. Although the captain also missed it, he did not miss it so greatly as Hiram.

The boys who had found out the date of Hiram's birthday were discussing what kind of present would give him the greatest pleasure.

"I'll tell you, Harold," exclaimed Jack, "let's make him a present of a lot of smoking tobacco. I think that would please him as much as anything else."

"There's no doubt about tobacco pleasing him," said Harold laughing, "but where can we get any? I know Hiram has searched all over the brig, especially in the forecastle, without being able to find even the smallest quantity."

"Let me whisper something in your ear," said Jack. "Yesterday, while unpacking a large box marked with Doctor Parsons' name and filled principally with books, I found two packages of tobacco weighing about twenty pounds each. I took them to the captain, who told me that it was a splendid brand of

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smoking tobacco ; I asked him whether you and I could have some of it for a present on Hiram's birthday to-morrow."

" I'll divide this into two equal parts," said the captain. " You and Harold can give one of these to Hiram and I will keep the other."

" That will be splendid," said Harold.

Jack had secretly been teaching Satan a new phrase with which to greet Hiram on his birthday, so next morning at breakfast Satan, who had been schooled by Jack to give him birthday greetings, and was now able to distinctly say : " Many happy returns, Hiram ; have a smoke ? " succeeded in speaking these words very plainly, but probably regarding this as too short a sentence unfortunately spoiled the effect by adding another phrase, " You're a devil ! You're a devil ! " much to the amusement of all at the table.

" I'd like it well enough, Satan," replied Hiram good-naturedly, " but I kain't smoke without the tobaccy."

" Hiram," said Harold, as soon as the laughter had ceased, and each of the party had wished him many happy returns of the day, " suppose you had your wish, and that I would agree to give you a pound of anything you might ask for, what would you most wish to receive ? "

" I allow, Mr. Harold," was the reply, " there wouldn't be much hesertation on my part, but there ain't no use in my telling ye what I'd like, fer I know it can't be got on this here wessel."

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"But," persisted Harold, "what would you ask for?"

"Wall," said Hiram, "I won't deceive ye. I would ask for a pound of smoking tobaccy. I'd ruther hev thet than a pound of gold; that is, supposing I was still on this brig, fer I couldn't do anything here with the gold but could with the tobaccy."

"Well, then," said Harold, suddenly producing a pound of tobacco that was carefully wrapped in several papers, "accept this with my compliments."

"And," said Jack, suddenly producing a similar package, "take this with mine, Hiram."

It was a study to watch Hiram's face as he instantly brought the packages under his nose.

"Wall, I'll be swan. It sartinly smells like tobaccy, but it kain't be tobaccy. At least, I'm afeered it ain't."

"Open the package, Hiram," said the captain smiling.

Hiram did so and, finding it filled with a pound of the real stuff, at once drew his beloved pipe from his pocket, filled it, and lighting it commenced smoking with a smile breaking out all over his face.

"This be a grand present, boys. You couldn't hev brung me anything better'n this. Cap'in," he continued, "won't you jine me? This is the best stuff I ever smoked."

"Thank you, Hiram," replied the captain taking a pipe out of his pocket and filling and lighting it; "I greatly wanted to do this yesterday when Jack found the tobacco in a box in the hold marked with

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the doctor's name and filled mainly with books. The boys wanted to surprise you, so I resisted the desire to fill my pipe, for I was sure you would smell it at once."

Hiram watched the captain's face as he puffed away at his pipe.

"Feels kinder good, don't it, cap'in?"

"Yes, Hiram," said the captain, "it does; you seem to like it too."

"Wall, cap'in," said Hiram laughing, "I allow I be gittin' lots o' satisfaction out'n sucking this here pipe."

Fearing the example of two men being so much pleased with smoking might produce in them a desire to smoke, Hiram turned to the boys and said:

"My boys, I sartinly hope ye'll never larn to smoke. It's a bad habit, especially fer boys. Ain't that so, cap'in?"

"It is, indeed, boys," was the reply. "I frankly acknowledge that I would be better off if I had never learned to smoke. I think I understand just how you feel about smoking, Hiram. You want it bad and won't be happy until you get it. Isn't that so?"

"Wall," replied Hiram, "thet's treu for sartin."

"I'm the same way," said the captain; "but do you know, Hiram, I'm not sure I actually enjoy a smoke. I sometimes think that what I really enjoy is getting rid of the awful feeling of wanting a smoke, that I can only get rid of by smoking."

"Wall, cap'in," replied Hiram, "there may be su'th-

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ing in thet, and I agree with ye that smokin' is tarnation bad. But ef ye feel ye ought to stop, I'm willin', out of good feelin' fer ye, to smoke up the hull lot of yer tobaccy as well as mine."

"I guess I'll not trouble you to do that, Hiram," said the captain.

Next day, after dinner, when Jack went into the cabin to get a book to read he found the captain looking over some of the doctor's fishing-tackle, and getting a number of lines ready.

"Are you thinking of going fishing, captain?" inquired Jack.

"Yes, Jack, we are now in a part of the ocean in which there are many excellent food-fish. If the speed of the brig becomes sufficiently decreased we will try our hands at fishing. We have been living so long on canned food that fresh fish would be not only pleasant but very wholesome."

"What kind of fish do you think may be caught in these waters?"

"In the deeper waters, cod and halibut. In the shallow waters, herring, mackerel, and salmon. This, however, depends largely on the season of the year."

When Jack told Harold what his uncle was doing he exclaimed:

"It'll be a jolly thing to fish off the brig, I'll go and help uncle fix the lines."

The waters through which they were now moving were very different from those of the Kuro Sivo. Although the general color was blue yet it was not of

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so deep a hue. Moreover, they frequently passed through a floating mass of seaweed known as wrack or kelp. When Harold first saw it he at once thought of the Sargasso Sea in the North Atlantic that his uncle had told him about, so he said to Hiram:

“Have you ever seen the Sargasso Sea?”

“Which one, Mr. Harold?” inquired Hiram.

“Any of them.”

“Yes, my lad, I’ve seen them a-many times. Why do ye ask?”

“I was wondering if the kind of weed through which we are now floating is the same as that which forms the sea in the North Atlantic?” he inquired.

“I aren’t sartin,” Hiram replied, “but I think t’aint; better ax yer uncle. He knows much more about sech things than me. This here weed through which we are now passing is called wrack. It is much coarser than most of the weed I hev seen in the Sargasso Sea.”

“There’s a great quantity of it around us to-day,” said Jack who was standing near and heard the conversation.

“Yes, Mr. Jack, and there’ll likely be a greater sight afore long. Many’s the times I’ve sailed in these seas. As fer as I kin remember you’ll find more weed to the east of us. Howsumever, that’ll depend on the pint from which the wind is a-blowin’. Ef we get into a big mass of it there may be some things worth seein’.”

“Such as what?” inquired Harold eagerly.

“Wall, it might be that we’ll see a curious critter called the sea-otter found in these waters. This animal

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hez a fur that every one allows is werry purty. Indeed, I'm told that some of the best of these furs will fetch several hundred dollars."

"I'd like to get a few of them," said Harold.

"Wall, my lad, ye may, and then again ye mayn't. A-many years ago there were plenty of these critters in these waters, but they've killed the animals off so tarnation fast that nigh all o' them hev disappeared except fur out from the shore."

The boys were so interested in the differences between the wrack or the seaweed through which they were floating, and that which forms the mass of the Sargasso Sea, that they took the first opportunity of questioning the captain about it.

"Captain," said Jack when he next saw him, "won't you tell me the exact meaning of the word; I don't quite understand?"

"What's the word, Jack?" was the answer; "perhaps I can tell you its meaning."

"It's the word 'wrack,'" he replied.

"By wrack is meant any coarse seaweed that is found floating on the waters or has been thrown up on shore by the waves," was the reply. "It is a general word that includes a number of different species of seaweed."

"And what is meant by 'kelp'?" inquired Jack.

"Kelp," said the captain, "is the same thing as wrack. Wrack, however, is generally called kelp when it has been gathered into piles on the coast, spread out in the sun so as to dry, and then burned. In this way

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there is produced a mass known as kelp, a substance formerly employed in the manufacture of glass because of the large quantities of soda it contains. At one time the collection of kelp constituted an industry that gave employment to great numbers of people living on the eastern coasts of Europe. The soda required for the manufacture of glass and other purposes is now seldom obtained from seaweed, since it can be produced at a much cheaper rate from other products. Wrack or kelp, however, is still employed for spreading over the fields as manure, or as a cheap fuel by the poorer classes. I have read that in the Orkney Islands which, as you probably remember, are situated in the Atlantic Ocean, north of Scotland, the kelp industry employs at least twenty thousand men. Now, however, although the wrack is still collected, this work does not begin to give employment to so many."

"Is the wrack or seaweed through which we are now passing the same as that which is found in the Sargasso Sea that you were telling us about?" inquired Jack.

"No, Jack," was the reply; "although there are many kinds of weeds that collect in the Sargasso Sea, yet perhaps most of them grow directly on the surface of the water, while the weeds forming the wrack or kelp consist almost entirely of the kind that grow on the bed of the ocean. It is only when the waves of storms tear up these weeds by the roots that they rise to the surface and are brought together by the wind in the large floating masses we can see around us."

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“Then I imagine,” said Jack, “these plants or weeds are lighter than water.”

“The entire mass is,” was the reply; “but if you examine some of these weeds you will see what it is that makes them rise to the top of the water when their roots are torn from the bottom. Suppose we go on deck and get some of this weed and I’ll show you and Harold what I mean.”

“That’s jolly,” said Harold. “Come, Jack, let’s go and see what the captain means.”

There was no difficulty in obtaining a plentiful supply of the floating weeds. Spreading this material out on the deck the captain said:

“Although there are many kinds of weeds here, yet as you can see they consist mainly of three varieties.” Then, selecting specimens of each of these kinds and placing them in three separate heaps, he threw the remainder overboard and then turning to the boys said: “Now I’ll tell you something of each of these kinds.”

“What do you call this kind, uncle?” asked Harold picking up a specimen from one of the piles.

“That kind is called knob wrack from the knobs or hollow spaces filled with air you can see on the different parts of the stems.”

“And what do you call this kind, sir?” asked Jack taking a specimen from another pile.

“That is known as the bladder wrack. Here the hollow spaces come in pairs of air-vessels not unlike large nuts.”

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“This is a funny variety,” said Harold taking up a specimen from the remaining pile. “It has scalloped edges.”

“That kind is called the serrated wrack or weed. It takes this name from the jagged, saw-like cuts on its edges.”

“Look here, captain,” said Jack closely examining portions of the serrated wrack covered in places by a delicate and beautiful lace-work of a whitish substance; “is this a part of the weed itself or is it some other kind of material?”

“What you refer to, Jack, is entirely different from the weed itself. In fact, it consists of parasitic animals known as zoophytes.”

“You don’t mean to say that thing is an animal, do you, uncle?” exclaimed Harold in a surprised tone. “Why, it looks more like a plant than an animal.”

“That’s just what a zoophyte is, Harold. Indeed, the name zoophyte means an animal-plant, or a plant-like animal. A zoophyte only resembles a plant in appearance. In other respects it differs from it. There are a great variety of zoophytes in the ocean, and sometime we may find time to study some of them. I’m sure both of you will enjoy doing this.

“You must not suppose, boys,” continued the captain, “that the three kinds of weeds I’ve shown you are the only kinds that collect in wrack or kelp. On the contrary, there are many others.”

“Uncle Arthur,” exclaimed Harold, “are fish or other animals ever found in the floating kelp or wrack?”

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I don't mean things like the zoophytes that one can hardly tell from plants, but I mean everyday animals like fish, crabs, oysters, or starfish?"

"Yes," said the captain, "there is great abundance of animal life in the masses of wrack or floating kelp. One of the commonest of these is a variety of spider-like crab, known as the kelp-crab. It is difficult to see this animal because its color is almost exactly that of the kelp on which it is found. Then there is a variety of salmon called the kelp-salmon—a rather small fish, but still a fish that makes an excellent food."

"A-many a times hev I eaten that 'ere fish," exclaimed Hiram, "and mighty good eatin' it be. I calculate we kin git some o' them afore long."

"Are there any other kind of fish in these waters, Hiram?" inquired Jack.

"Yes, Mr. Jack, when you git furder to the east off the shallow water on the banks big fish ken be cotched at times."

"What kind of fish, Hiram?" asked Harold.

"Salmon; and in the deeper water cod or halibut. But by rights to catch these fish we should wait until the brig gits on the edge of the current whar it'll not move so fast thru the water."

"There is one kind of fish, Hiram," said the captain, "that I have been rigging up some lines for, that we may be able to catch while the brig is moving, by using a squid, and that is herring."

"I know what you mean, uncle," exclaimed Harold, "a spoon-shaped piece of zinc or silver with a hook,

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attached to the end of a fishing-line and thrown over the stern of the boat. As the squid is dragged through the water after the boat it looks like a little fish, and is swallowed by the larger fish that are caught in this way."

"But, Jack," said the captain, "we must not forget why it was we examined the seaweed as closely as we have done. You were asking whether, since the seaweed rose so rapidly to the surface after its roots were torn off the sea-bottom by the waves, it did not prove the weed was much lighter than the water, and I told you it was only generally so. Of course you can tell me now what it is that makes the weed rise to the surface when freed from the bottom."

"The air-cells or bladder-like appendages," said Jack.

"That's right," was the reply.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE HOME OF THE SEA-OTTER

THE wrack covered the surface of the water so completely that the occasional clear spaces were insufficient to permit the use of squid fishing until three days afterward. Then, however, they had a few hours for several days in succession, when an opportunity was afforded for squidding. During this time they succeeded in taking half a dozen fairly large-sized mackerel, together with one large fish somewhat resembling the bluefish of the Atlantic coast. They proved most delicious eating, either when fried or baked, in each of which styles Hiram placed them on the table.

"They taste all right, Harold, don't they?" inquired Jack.

"You bet they do," replied Harold.

"Harold," asked the captain, "do you know why the fish tastes so nice?"

"Why, certainly, uncle," was the reply; "they taste nice because they are nice. Is there any other reason?"

"Yes, Harold, they taste so nice because you haven't had any fish for a long while. We have been living so long on canned goods and salted or canned meats that a piece of fresh fish tastes especially good."

"Oh, I understand," said Harold laughing; "like

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the tobacco you and Hiram were smoking. It tasted good because it was good, and because you hadn't had any for so long a time."

"Yes," said the captain, looking at Hiram and smiling; "but it tasted good principally because we hadn't any tobacco for so long a time."

They had now reached a part of the ocean where the masses of floating wrack were almost continuous, so that there were but little chances for fishing. Still the boys enjoyed the sport so much that they spent much of their spare time on deck hoping that a chance for fishing would present itself. One day when they had waited several hours in vain for a clear space, Jack turned to Harold and said:

"Let's get the glasses and examine the ocean ahead of the bow to see if we can see any clear spaces."

They did this and stood watching the sea. While thus employed Jack, who had been examining the weed on the left-hand side of the brig, or the side nearest the islands, suddenly turning to Harold, exclaimed:

"Look at that curious animal in the mass of wrack on your left," he cried, pointing to a place where the weed had collected in so dense a mass that it looked as though one might almost walk on it.

"Where do you mean?" asked Harold, eagerly looking in the right direction, but not at the exact spot Jack referred to.

"No, no," replied Jack, seeing the direction in which Harold had his glasses pointed; "more to your right, near the middle of that big mass of wrack."

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"Oh, I see now what you mean," exclaimed Harold.  
"I wonder what it is?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I wonder if it can be a sea-otter that Hiram was telling us about the other day."

Both Hiram and the captain happened to be on deck.

"I'll run and ask Hiram," said Harold, and in a few moments the two men were examining the animal.

"That's a sea-otter for sartin, my lads," exclaimed Hiram.

They were too far off from the animal to risk a shot. Had the water been still they could readily have killed it, but that day the water was rough so that the animal was being tossed to and fro by the waves as they rocked the mass of seaweed on which it was resting. While they were watching and trying to get a better view of it, the animal diving into the water disappeared.

"Watch it now, my lads," said Hiram; "that 'ere critter ain't much fer livin' under water. Ye'll soon see it agin on the top."

Hiram's prediction was soon realized. In a few moments the animal appeared on a part of the floating weed nearer to the brig. It again disappeared and this time emerged in a few moments in a clearer spot of water still nearer the brig. It apparently had not seen them; for, exhibiting no fear, it stretched itself out on its back at nearly full length with its hind legs close together and its forefeet stretched upward in the air. It seemed to greatly enjoy the rough way in which the waves tossed it to and fro.

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"Get your rifles, boys," said the captain, "and see if you can hit it."

By the time the boys had their rifles the floating sea-otter was near enough to the brig to afford a fairly good shot.

"Let's fire together," said Jack.

They did so and were successful in hitting the animal, for a faint crimson streak dyed the water near the place at which it had momentarily dived immediately on being struck. In a little while it appeared floating on the water apparently quite dead.

"O Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold, "won't you launch the boat and get the otter?"

"I certainly will, Harold. The sea-otter is a rare animal. Its skin would make a splendid present for your mother when you next see her."

"When I next see her," said the boy sorrowfully. "Do you think that will ever happen, uncle?"

"Why, of course I do," was the reply. "I can't say when, but I trust it'll not be long. Be brave, my lad, and keep a stiff upper lip. We'll do all we can to get you home. Almost any time something may happen to put us on a passing vessel. So be brave and let's make the most out of the very comfortable position in which we now find ourselves."

"Very well, uncle," replied Harold; "then suppose we lower the boat and get the sea-otter."

This was done, and the otter was secured and brought on the deck. It measured about four feet from the tip of its nose to the end of its short, stumpy

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tail. Its body had the general shape of a beaver. Its head was moderately large, round, and shaped something like a cat's. Its ears were short; its eyes black and almost circular in shape. It also resembled a cat in that it was furnished with long white, loose-hanging mustaches. Though like the beaver in the shape of its tail, yet the tail was not so well developed. Its legs, however, were smaller and better adapted for life in the sea. This was especially the case with its hind limbs that more closely resembled fins than feet.

"What a magnificent fur," exclaimed the captain, examining the otter.

It was indeed magnificent. Underneath, the hair was of a rich deep chestnut brown and was almost ebony-like in depth of color on the back. It is no wonder that this fur is employed for only trimming sealskin sacks, for its high price renders it practically impossible, except in the case of exceedingly wealthy people, to employ the fur for an entire coat or cloak.

"On what does the sea-otter feed, captain?" inquired Jack.

"I understand," was the reply, "that the animal lives on crabs and shellfish, and in the absence of this food, on some of the marine plants that accumulate in the wrack. This animal, however, lives almost exclusively in the stormy seas of the North Pacific, and therefore has not been very carefully studied by naturalists, so that we have to rely on the accounts of the hunters who are almost exclusively Aleuts, or the inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands. You have been

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in these parts, Hiram," he continued; "have you ever heard the hunters speak of the food of the sea-otter?"

"I've heerd 'em talkin' about it many a time," was the reply. "They agree that the critter eats crabs and shellfish. Some say she feeds on fish, though there be others wot deny this. Thar is a kind of seaweed, a kind of kelp with big leaves, thet's called the sea-otter's cabbage, 'cause she's so often found resting on it. But whether she does this because the leaves are so big, or because she eats part of them, I've never heerd. Hev ye ever heerd, cap'in?" he inquired of his companion.

"I never have, Hiram," was the reply. "I have, however, read some interesting facts concerning the young of the sea-otter. The animals live in pairs, so that we may see another otter in the neighborhood. There is but one otter born at a time. They appear to be born, however, in all months of the year, since young animals are found during every month. The cradle of the young sea-otter is the floating kelp masses. Here the young animal is literally rocked in the cradle of the deep, and from its earliest life is accustomed to the rough, tempestuous, and chilly waters of the region. The mother is very affectionate, manifesting great fondness for its offspring, and will fight fiercely when its safety is threatened, its small black snaky eyes assuming a ferocious appearance."

"Captain," inquired Jack, "are these animals found in many parts of the world?"

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"No, Jack," was the reply; "I believe they are limited to the waters of the North Pacific, generally between fifty and sixty degrees north latitude."

"Hiram," remarked Harold, "we must try to preserve this fur. Do you know how to do this?"

"Yes, Mr. Harold, I'll fix it up fer ye, and there is also something else I'll attend to, fer the flesh of the critter is good eatin', so I'll prepare a stew for dinner."

"Come into the cabin, boys," said the captain, "and I will tell you something about the history of the sea-otter. You remember I told you the other day that the westernmost island of the Aleutian Chain, which is the westernmost land of the North American continent, is named Attoo. It appears when the Russians discovered the Aleutian Island Chain that Attoo was first visited. To the great surprise and delight of the Russians they found this exceedingly rare and highly prized fur was very common; so common, indeed, that it was not unusual to find the natives wearing huge cloaks made entirely of sea-otter skins. Moreover, the inhabitants appeared to possess a great number of these furs, which curiously enough they did not seem to regard as any more valuable than the furs of the sea-lions or the seal, and willingly bartered them for articles of comparatively little value.

The eagerness manifested by their visitors naturally caused the inhabitants to commence an almost continuous warfare on the sea-otter, so that the number of animals slain greatly exceeded anything that was heretofore known. The pursuit of the sea-otter was

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carried to the adjoining islands, with the result that always attends an indiscriminate slaughter of any animal; *i. e.*, it decreased in numbers and at last became almost exterminated, so that not only the island of Attoo, but also the neighboring islands—the inhabitants of which had depended largely on the pursuit of the sea-otter as their principal industry—like the otters themselves, soon began to decrease in numbers and found no little difficulty in continuing their existence by fishing, as well as by the pursuit of the sea-lion and the seal.

“The name given by the natives to the sea-otter is the ‘kahlan.’ It appears that their method for capturing the animal consisted in spreading nets with coarse meshes over the kelp-bed or otter-grass. The nets were about eighteen feet in length, and from six to ten feet in breadth. As soon as spread over the otter-grass the natives go to the nearest bluffs and watch them. When the otters would go out to play or rest they would become entangled in the meshes and apparently overcome by fear they would make little or no effort to escape, so that they could readily be captured. It seems, however, that the people on the other islands have never employed this method for hunting the sea-otter.”

Some three hours after they had shot the sea-otter, Jack, who had again gone on deck to examine the wrack with his glasses, so as to take any advantage that might present itself for squid fishing, saw another sea-otter floating on its back, engaged in something

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that greatly surprised him. Calling the attention of the captain to what he was watching, he exclaimed:

“Captain, if any one had told me this I would not have believed him. Look at that sea-otter; why it’s as playful as a kitten.”

“What do you mean?” exclaimed the captain, who had not yet sighted it. “Oh, I see,” he added as he caught sight of the animal. “It is indeed a strange thing. Watch it while I go and call Harold.”

The sea-otter referred to by Jack was lying on its back in the water amusing itself by tossing a piece of seaweed in the air from paw to paw.

“Jack,” said Harold who had come at the captain’s call and had been watching it, “it wouldn’t make a bad ball-player would it?”

“Well,” was the reply, “it never seems to miss, but then the ball is never thrown very far.”

“The animal is very playful,” said the captain, watching the animal. “It reminds one of a kitten in this respect.”

“I have heard of otters that are caught in different parts of Europe in the rivers. These are different animals from the sea-otters, are they not, captain?” said Jack.

“Yes, Jack, the animal you refer to is known as the river-otter. Unlike the sea-otter it lives principally on fish and sometimes is very destructive to salmon. It is a smaller animal than the sea-otter, seldom exceeding two feet in length from the end of its nose to the tip of its tail.

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“The river-otter,” he continued, “was at one time commoner in Europe than now. Its fur is by no means so handsome or beautiful as that of the sea-otter. The animals make their nests near the water’s edge, lining them with grass and leaves. They bring forth from four to five young at a time. A species of river-otter found in Canada greatly excels the European species in the beauty of its glossy fur. This animal, which is found as far north as 67° latitude, is generally captured by sinking a steel trap near the mouth of its burrow. By the way, boys,” he added, “like the sea-otter, this animal is very playful. According to hunters it is not unusual to see the animal climb to the top of a hill covered with snow in winter, or a moist, sloping bank in summer, when, lying on its belly, with its forefeet bent backward, it gives itself a push with its hind legs and swiftly slides down hill.”

“They must be very intelligent animals,” said Jack.

“Yes,” was the reply, “I understand that there is a species of the otter found in India that has been trained by the fishermen and taught to catch fish for them. Indeed, I know of certain tame otters that have been trained in Great Britain for the same purpose.”

Harold watched the process of preparing the sea-otter’s fur with no little anxiety, for when he learned that a single fur, when fairly good, was commonly sold for from one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars, and that some brought as high as four hundred dollars in China, which is the principal market of the Russians for this fur, he was especially desirous of being able

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to carry this fur to his mother. Nor was this desire lessened when he learned from the captain that very fine specimens sometimes brought in the markets of New York, or other large cities of civilized countries, a price as great as one thousand dollars.

## CHAPTER XV

### WITH ROMPEY AND SATAN

IT is a mistaken idea that practically all the actions of the lower animals are based on what is called instinct, and are entirely devoid of reasoning powers. The boys, who naturally spent much of their spare time with Rompey and Satan soon saw, like all who have taken the trouble to become actually acquainted with animals from observing them, and whose knowledge is not limited to what they read, that both of their animal friends possessed, in a fairly high degree, not only the power of observing and remembering what they had seen, but also of drawing conclusions therefrom; that is, of actually reasoning. For example, one morning Rompey came running in an excited manner to Hiram who was alone on watch on the deck, and looking earnestly in his face began whining as if trying to talk with him.

“What is it, Rompey,” he exclaimed. “Want me to scratch your head.”

Evidently this was not what Rompey wanted. Instead of wagging his tail in thanks for the petting, he withdrew a little from Hiram and continued whining, and then running a short distance toward a hatchway leading to the middle hold, stopped, continued barking, evidently wishing that Hiram should follow him.

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"Oh, ye want me to play with ye," said Hiram. "I hev no time now; go ask Mr. Harold or Mr. Jack to play with you."

Finding that Hiram could not be persuaded to follow him, the intelligent dog ran toward the cabin where the boys had just finished dressing and were about ready to come on deck. He at once repeated the earnest looks and the whining with which he had treated Hiram. He found, however, that the boys were quicker to understand his actions, being better acquainted with him.

Turning to Harold Jack exclaimed:

"Something has happened Rompey wants to tell us about. What's the matter, Rompey?" he continued; "do you want us to go with you and see something?"

While of course we do not mean to assert that Rompey understood all the words directed at him, yet we do believe that at least he had ideas associated with some of the words that his request for them to accompany him was understood; for he at once answered by a number of joyful barks accompanied by his running toward the hatchway leading to the middle hold where the water-tanks were kept.

"Something is wrong in the middle hold, Harold," said Jack. "Let's follow him."

Following the dog he led them to one of the largest of the water-tanks from the faucet of which the water was rapidly escaping.

"Well, I declare," said Jack; "look at that, Harold.

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Rompey has seen the water running and remembers that it is never permitted to run without some one being there. He has, therefore, come to tell us, knowing that something was wrong."

Harold was greatly pleased with the intelligence displayed by his dog, and turning to the animal, said:

"Good dog, Rompey," and began to scratch him and pat his head. While Jack also let the animal see that he was pleased with what he had done. Nor was Rompey at all surprised at being thus praised. Of course, he was greatly pleased at having succeeded in bringing them to the tank, and acted as though he thought the praise he was getting was only his due. He therefore contented himself with frisking around and barking joyously.

The noise made around the water-tank attracted both the captain and Hiram to the place. When they heard what had happened, Hiram exclaimed:

"Wall, I'm jiggered. That's what the beastie wuz tryin' to tell me. Good dog, Rompey," he added, stooping and petting him.

"Captain," cried Jack, "I have heard people say that dogs and other animals cannot reason; that the things they do result from what is called instinct. Now, if what Rompey has just done is not the result of reasoning I'd like to know what you call it. It seems to me that some animals possess as much reasoning powers as many human beings."

"I agree with you, Jack," was the reply. "There was a time, and that not very long ago, when it was

generally believed that practically all the actions of animals are due to a blind impulse, the animal acting without any deliberation or knowledge of what it is doing. That is to say, that animals, as Sir William Hamilton believed, performed 'blindly and ignorantly a work of intelligence and knowledge.' Now, while many of the actions of the lower animals are undoubtedly of this character such, for example, as the apparent ingenuity displayed in the building of nests by birds, or in the shaping of the hexagonal cells of the hives of the honey-bee, or the construction of its web by the spider, as well as in other similar actions, yet there are other cases, such as what Rompey has done this morning, that cannot be explained unless it be assumed that the animal performed the act deliberately and for the purpose of bringing about certain results, which it knew from experience would occur when the thing was done.

"On the other hand," he continued, "there are philosophers such as Darwin who not only assert that animals possess reasoning powers, but even go so far as to assert that there is no real difference between instinct and reason, instinct being, they claim, in reality an intellectual act."

"And is it still generally believed," inquired Jack, "that nearly all the habits of animals are due to instinct?"

"No, Jack," replied the captain. "The number of people who believe in the presence of reasoning powers in animals is constantly increasing."

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"I'm glad to hear that," said Jack. "It seems to be the more sensible belief."

"And so say I," exclaimed Harold. "I'm sure Rompey understands much of what I say to him, and I'm also sure that I know much of what he tries to say to me, not only by the wagging of his tail and his general appearance, but also by the sounds he makes."

Rompey appeared undoubtedly to possess memory, and this led to the curious incident we are about to describe. Like many other animals he appeared to possess a liking for certain musical tunes. Generally he appeared indifferent when most tunes were sung in his hearing. There was one tune, however, that appeared associated with something in his mind that had occurred in his former life which always appeared to awaken old and pleasing remembrances. While schoolboys at Eton, Harold and Jack belonged to one of the glee clubs. While on the brig they were in the habit of singing some of these songs. Both had good voices and correct ears and, having been well trained, their voices harmonized so that the singing was very agreeable.

Of the two animals Satan seemed to possess a more cultivated ear than Rompey, for the bird was apparently always glad to hear them singing. Rompey, on the contrary, was indifferent. While he remained with them while the singing was going on, he appeared to be pleased mainly because he was in their company. As soon, however, as they began singing the well-known air, "Charley, Come Back to Me," Rompey

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would become excited apparently by very pleasing memories, for he at once began to show signs of pleasure, pricking up his ears and looking around as if expecting some one to come. He would do this even if the air was only hummed gently, but when the boys began to sing he showed greater excitement, especially when he heard the phrase, "O Charley, come back to me." There was evidently something belonging to this air and its words that meant much to Rompey. Indeed, this was so evident that the boys soon became in the habit of calling this song Rompey's song.

"Harold," Jack remarked one afternoon, "I think I've made a great discovery concerning Rompey's life before we took him from the drifting boat."

"Oh, come, Jack," said Harold good-naturedly, "what are you giving me! Do you want me to believe that you have discovered a way of reading the past history of Rompey?"

"That's about what I mean."

"Explain yourself."

"All right, I believe I can tell you the name of Rompey's young master."

"Oh, you can, can you," cried Harold. "I don't see how you can call that a great discovery."

"You don't," exclaimed Jack in a surprised tone. "Suppose you tell me the name of Rompey's young master."

"Why Harold, of course; ain't I the dog's young master?"

"I don't mean that," replied Jack. "You remem-

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ber what your uncle said when you were given permission to keep Rompey, when we told him the dog at once came and laid himself down at your feet, that 'I believe that dog had a young master and that is the reason he selected you, Harold, from the rest.' "

"Oh, yes," said Harold, now greatly interested. "Do you think, Jack, that you've discovered what this boy's name was, supposing there was such a boy?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I think I've discovered his name."

"Please explain yourself, Jack," said Harold.

"It is this way," said Jack; "Rompey evidently recognizes the song we call by his name. It must, therefore, have been a song that made an impression on his mind, possibly because it has been so frequently repeated or is connected with pleasant memories. I imagine that his young master either whistled or sang it often, and that possibly it was frequently sung in the house in which his young master lived. If this was so, then I would reason out that his name was Charley."

"How can we find out?" asked Harold.

"That's easy," said Jack, "watch Rompey while we sing 'Charley, Come Back to me.' "

As they repeated the words of the refrain Rompey showed the same great excitement, looking up into Harold's face with a sorrowful look, so that at last tears actually ran down out of the animal's eyes.

"Why, look at that, Jack," exclaimed Harold, "Rompey's actually crying."

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"Now, Harold," said Jack, "look at him closely," and then addressing the dog, he said: "Rompey, where's Charley; go find Charley."

The behavior of the dog was extremely curious. He became so excited that he actually wept aloud, looking around eagerly as if he expected some one to come, and then seeing no one, he began looking alternately from Harold to Jack in a beseeching manner, as if he was trying to say:

"Please find Charley for me."

"Do you want Charley, Rompey?" asked Jack.

Rompey jumped up and wagged his tail and began looking around him in an excited manner as if he thought his young master was actually going to appear.

Rompey's actions were so surprising that the boys called the captain and Hiram to come and look at the dog.

"Come here, Uncle Arthur," said Harold, "I think Jack has discovered the name of Rompey's young master. I mean the young lad you thought he formerly belonged to before we took him out of the drifting boat."

"What do you think the name is, Harold?" inquired the captain.

"Come here and I'll tell you," said Harold.

As the captain was approaching Jack whispered in his ear:

"Ask Rompey if he wants Charley to come to him."

"Do you want Charley, Rompey?" said the captain.

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Again the dog showed great excitement, not only wagging his tail and making a wonderful series of barkings, but he also rested his paws on the captain's shoulders and began barking as if he was saying:

“Please bring Charley to me.”

“There's no doubt in my mind, Jack,” said the captain, “that Rompey's former master's name was Charley. The dog's memory has been so impressed by the name and the song, that the air or tune awakens these old memories, and this is especially so when the name Charley is heard.”

But they had another proof that both Rompey and Satan possessed the ability to reason. It soon became evident both knew that certain strokes on the bell meant a call to meals. For example, eight bells or twelve o'clock meant the dinner hour. And there were no members of the crew who responded more promptly to these bells than Rompey and Satan. Indeed, they were generally the first to reach the cabin in which the meals were now regularly served. This fact was remarked by Harold, who had been constantly on the lookout for evidences of reasoning power on the parts of the animals.

“These animals,” he said to Jack, “know what the bells mean as well as you or I do.”

This behavior of the bird and the dog concerning the call to meals was far from being an unusual thing. Very probably some of my readers who may chance to have pet animals know that they soon become familiar with the meal hours, and manage to be on hand

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at the proper time. That the dog and bird knew the significance of the eight bells and could count up to eight was evident from the fact that at that particular time of the day it was only eight bells they would pay any attention to, so that it was either because they had an idea of the number and could count at least up to eight, or had some idea of the lapse of time so that the particular eight bells in the middle of the day meant for them a call to dinner, as much as if the words had been used instead of the taps of the bell.

Something happened one day that proved the animals had reasoned out some connection between eight bells and the bringing of food from the galley to the cabin; for while the captain and the two boys were sitting on the deck reading they were surprised to hear eight bells sounded.

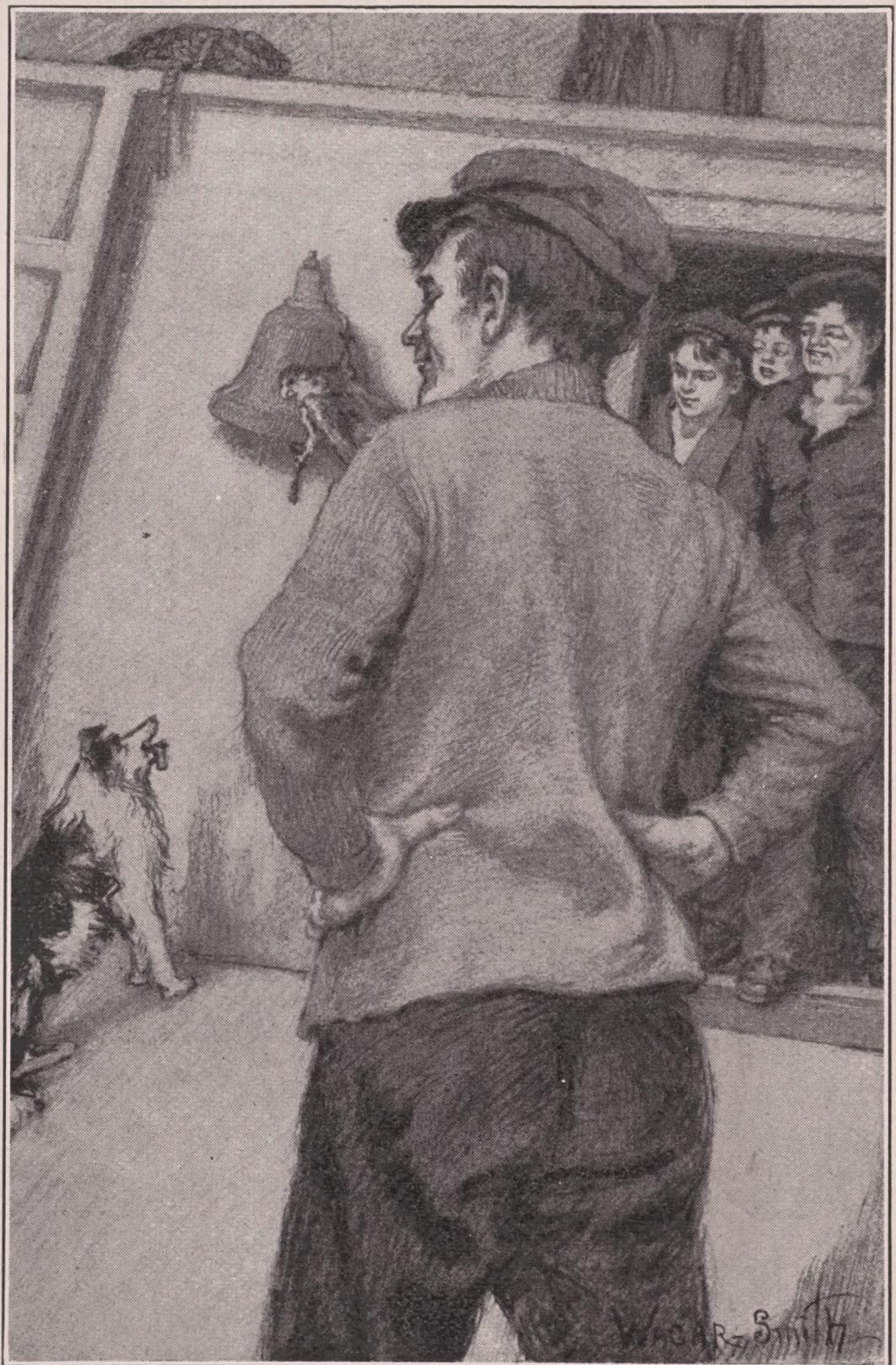
“Hello!” exclaimed the captain looking at his watch, “Hiram is some fifteen minutes early. Jack, go and see how he has made such a mistake. Tell him he has sounded the bells fifteen minutes sooner than he should have done.”

As Jack went to the galley, Hiram, who saw him coming, cried:

“Now, Mr. Jack, either you or Mr. Harold have been a-monkeying with the bell. Ye mustn’t do that. I suppose you are hungry and wanted to hurry dinner.”

“You’re wrong there, Hiram,” exclaimed Jack. “Harold and I were seated on the deck with the captain when we heard eight bells sounded. The captain, thinking you had made a mistake, sent me to ask





*"Satan on the support of the bell with  
the clapper in his claws"*

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you how it was, for the bell was sounded some fifteen minutes too early."

When Jack assured him that neither he, the captain, nor Harold had sounded the bells he was not only greatly surprised but evidently no little frightened.

"Wall, Mr. Jack," he exclaimed, "now do ye believe in speerits? If neither ye, nor Harold, nor yet the captain sounded them strokes what could it hev been but a speerit or a ghost?"

"Must have been a hungry ghost," said Jack laughing.

"Now, Mr. Jack," said Hiram, "don't joke about this here thing, it's serious. Do you know what these here sounds on the bell means?"

"No," said Jack, "unless it means that somebody was hungry and wants to hurry the dinner."

"No," said Hiram; "it means that some one in this here crew is soon goin' to want for wittles."

Just then eight bells sounded again. They all ran toward the bell before which they found the captain standing, laughing heartily; for there were both Rompey and Satan—Rompey standing under the bell and Satan on the support of the bell with the clapper in his claws, giving the bell fairly strong strokes. The strokes not only followed one another at the same intervals that were employed when regularly sounding them, but as soon as eight bells had been sounded Satan stopped. When the sound ceased both animals looked at them and proceeded gravely toward the cabin looking back every now and then as much as to say:

"Come to dinner; don't you hear the bells?" While Satan added the very appropriate phrase: "I am starving! I am starving! Give me some food."

They all joined the captain in laughing at the cleverness of the trick. It was evidently due to the combined sagacity of both animals, but probably mainly to Rompey, who unable to reach the clapper of the bell had persuaded Satan to do the striking. In order to prevent the recurrence of this trick both animals were punished by being deprived of the meal that was served when the eight bells were properly sounded.

Being so much together the dog and the parrot soon became great friends. They played and frolicked with each other like little children. Satan had a habit of hiding little articles that Rompey had taken a fancy for. The bird seemed to enjoy the dog's long hunt for the lost article, and it was only when Rompey would give the search up in disgust that Satan would go and bring the article and, watching until Rompey was looking in another direction, would quietly place it in some out-of-the-way portion of the deck when it would call out to Rompey something that of course the boys could not understand, but which Rompey seemed to understand thoroughly, for he would at once run to the place and get the missing article.

Although Rompey seemed to take this play of Satan's in good part for the first three or four times, it was evident that he was growing suspicious of his companion; for one day while playing with a bit of wood that Harold had been whittling, he left it on the

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deck where the parrot could see it and, pretending to forget it, walked off to another part of the deck. He was watching it, however; for as soon as Satan, believing he would not be seen, had seized the bit of wood in his talons and was about flying away with it, Rompey, suddenly turning, barked as if to say:

“I got you that time, old fellow,” and both animals appeared to enjoy the joke immensely.

The neighborhood of the galley-fire when cooking was going on was a favorite spot for both dog and bird, which they spent no little time in watching. Hiram, who was a good-natured fellow, would throw them little odds and ends every now and then which they greatly enjoyed eating. One day when something was being prepared of which both animals were very fond, they had begged in vain for some of it before the dinner hour. Hiram, however, took no notice of them when the bird and the dog leaving the galley-fire went a little distance off and apparently formed some plot, for after a while they quietly returned to the galley. The two boys, who like the dog and the bird, also frequently visited the galley-fire had noticed the behavior of the animals, so that when they returned Jack said to Harold:

“Don’t say anything, Harold; let’s watch them. I think they’ll try to fool Hiram. I don’t know how, but there is evidently some mischief afoot.”

Jack was correct. Hiram, who had been smoking his pipe during the preparation of the dinner, at last reached some point where it was necessary to give

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his entire mind to the cooking. He had therefore taken his pipe from his mouth and placed it on the top of a small table that stood near the galley fire for the convenience of holding the things he needed in the preparation of the meal. As soon as Hiram had placed the pipe on the table and had turned toward the galley-fire, thus placing his back to the table, Rompey, looking at the bird as if to say, "Now's your chance," Satan seized the pipe in its talons, quickly flew with it from the galley, and after the absence of about a minute returned and perched near Rompey.

The boys observed what the bird had done with great enjoyment.

"Don't say anything to Hiram," whispered Harold; "let's see what they'll do next."

As soon as Hiram had attended to the particular work at the galley-fire, he stepped toward the bench to regain his pipe, but of course was unable to find it.

"'Pears to me I left it there," he exclaimed, as if talking to himself. "I'm afeered I'm gittin' fergetful."

"What are you looking for, Hiram?" inquired Jack in an innocent tone.

"My pipe," was the reply; "please help me find it, boys."

They pretended to do so, but of course the pipe was not found, so Hiram after thoroughly looking all over the galley several times gave it up in great disappointment. It was only when he had evidently given up any further search for the pipe that Satan flew out of the room and returning, apparently taking an oppor-

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tunity when Hiram was looking in another direction, quietly placed the pipe in one of the corners of the room, when Rompey, to whom this part of the game had evidently been given, gravely went to this corner of the room, took the pipe carefully in his mouth and came to Hiram with it, wagging his tail as if to say:

“Here’s your pipe, Hiram. Ain’t I a clever dog,” and then again begged for the choice tidbits that he had before unsuccessfully asked Hiram for several times.

Hiram, not seeing through the trick, said:

“Clever dog; I’ll give ye something fer finding my pipe.”

As soon as Rompey received his reward he at once proceeded to share it with Satan.

Hiram was greatly pleased at what he thought was the cleverness of the animal, and even when the boys told him all that they had observed, he could not but acknowledge that the trick they had played on him in order to obtain the choice bits for which they had previously begged in vain had been well planned.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A Most Perilous Position

THERE were several days in succession when the ocean was sufficiently free from floating kelp or wrack to permit squidding during portions of the day. One afternoon when the outlook for this kind of fishing promised to be unusually good, the boys obtained permission from the captain to fish from the stern of the life-boat, which had been securely fastened by a long rope at the stern of the brig. The captain and Hiram had lowered the boat from the davits. The captain who stood watching Hiram securely fastening the end of the rope to the brig then cried to the boys:

“When you get enough fishing call one of us and we’ll take you in and place the boat again on the davits.”

“All right, uncle,” cried Harold. “If we have any luck we’ll catch a good mess of fish for supper.”

Before leaving the boys the captain again stopped to examine the knots that fastened the boat to the brig.

“I reckon ye needn’t worry about that, cap’in,” said Hiram. “There’s no slip in that knot.”

“No,” replied the captain, “it’s all right. It would be bad business, Hiram, if it managed to get loose.”

“I’m not denying that,” replied Hiram; “but that’s no danger, sir. This end is all right. As to t’other

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end, I looked at it only this morning and med it tight, and thar's no reason fer anybody to hev meddled with it."

It was a pleasant afternoon. The air was wonderfully clear, so the boys looked forward to a lot of sport. As they threw their lines overboard it was great fun to watch them trail after the brig in the clear water. Every now and then the squid could be seen skimming over the surface of the water. When the sunlight fell on it, it threw a flash of light that made it appear like a fish swimming rapidly after the brig. It is no wonder, therefore, that even the keen-eyed fish thought it was one of the smaller fish on which they lived following in the wake of the vessel. Every now and then a good-sized mackerel, or other fish, would suddenly dart up from below and catching the deceptive bait was caught on the hook and hauled on board by the boys.

They were having great luck that afternoon, and had taken some twenty good-sized fish. They had therefore became so interested in their sport that they took no notice of a dense fog that had suddenly risen. At last, however, the fog so obscured the light of the sun that the fish ceased to bite for they could no longer see the squid flashing through the water. They therefore hauled in their lines, placing them carefully in the bottom of the boat, and then began crying:

"Brig ahoy! Hiram ahoy! Come pull us in; we're through fishing and have had great luck."

Although they shouted in a loud voice, still no answer came.

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"That's very odd, Harold," said Jack. "Surely they can't help hearing us at the little distance we are from the brig."

"Oh, perhaps, they are both in the cabin or attending to something in the hold," said Harold. "Cry out again, Jack, and I'll help you."

So the two boys again cried out at the top of their voices.

"Brig ahoy! Brig ahoy! Take us on board, please."

But still there came no answer.

"Harold," said Jack, "help me pull on the painter and that will bring us so near the brig as to make them hear us, and if they don't, we'll climb on board and surprise them."

As the boys stooped down in the end of the boat to take hold of the line they were unable to find it.

"It's a pretty dense fog, Jack," said Harold. "I can't even see the painter." And then looking up and seeing the alarmed look on Jack's face, he said: "Why what's the matter, Jack?"

"You don't see the painter, Harold, because it ain't here," was the reply. "The painter has become loosened. We are adrift! And in so dense a fog that we can neither see the brig nor can those on the brig see us. We are in very great danger."

"Don't give up too soon, Jack," said Harold; "let's shout again as loud as both of us can. Perhaps we can make them hear us."

Both boys again shouted:

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"Brig ahoy!" and continued shouting until they were hoarse, but no reply came from the brig. They had evidently been loose for some time, and the distance between them was too great to enable their cries to be heard.

"Jack," cried Harold, "this is indeed awful. Do you think we will ever see the brig again?"

"I hope so, Harold," exclaimed Jack. "But whatever we do don't let us lose our heads. We must keep cool so as to be able to take advantage of any chances that present themselves for again getting back to the brig. But, Harold," he continued, "I can't understand how our end of the painter has become untied. There has certainly been no necessity for any one touching it, and I remember this morning only a little while after breakfast that Hiram tied this end in a knot that he said could not become unfastened. Don't you remember we were talking about that kind of a knot yesterday as being the kind of knot used for this purpose because it could not slip."

"Jack," said Harold in a very sorrowful tone, "do you think you can ever forgive me? I am to blame for the painter coming unloosed."

"What do you mean, Harold," said Jack greatly surprised. "You certainly never purposely untied the painter, did you?"

"Of course I didn't," replied Harold reproachfully. "I got thinking of that knot yesterday after I left you, and I thought I would try to see if I couldn't make one as well as Hiram, so I unfastened the end of the rope

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and then made it into a knot just as I thought Hiram had made it and, as I believed, quite as secure as the one he had tied. But now, Jack, we are adrift, and that shows of course that the knot was not worth anything. I shall never forgive myself. Indeed, I feel so bad that I don't care what happens to me, were it not for your never getting back again."

"Now don't worry, Harold," said Jack, "you didn't intend to get us into this trouble. I'm sure that if you escape you will never meddle with so important a rope as a painter."

"I certainly never will," said Harold regretfully. "What in the world will Uncle Arthur say when he hears it?"

"I guess he will be so glad to see both of us again that he will at once forgive you," said Jack.

The fog of course was too dense for them to see the sun, but it rapidly grew much darker, and the boys knew that the sun had set.

Jack felt, being the older of the two boys, that their safety would depend largely on what he did. There were two pairs of oars in the boat. At first Jack thought that both he and Harold would pull as hard as they could with the hopes of reaching the brig, but then he reflected that they didn't know the direction in which the brig lay, and the chances being greater that they would go in the wrong direction, they would get farther and farther again from the brig. He therefore determined to talk the matter over with Harold.

"Harold," he said, "I want you to tell me what you

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think would be the best thing to do. If we remain in the boat we may be sure that both it and the brig will be carried by the current in the same direction, only I think the brig is drifting faster than we are. Now if we row and happen to get the right direction we can overtake the brig, but if we go in the wrong direction we will be getting farther from the brig. Do you think we had better row or simply drift after the brig with the current?"

Harold, who was a very bright boy, thought a moment and then said:

"I think, Jack, we had better drift. Then when the morning comes and the sun rises, if the fog lifts, we may be able to see the brig."

"I guess you are right, Harold," said Jack, "so let us store away the oars in the bottom of the boat."

The fog which had risen so quickly was not observed by either the captain or Hiram until at least half an hour after it had fallen. Indeed, they were so busy attending to some work in the middle hold that had it not been for Rompey who came into the cabin crying and at last persuaded them to follow him to the deck, that they would probably have remained some time longer in ignorance of it. Since Rompey had established his reputation for intelligence this time he had no difficulty in persuading them to follow him.

"There's something wrong on deck," said the captain. "Let's see what it is."

On reaching the deck they saw the fog which had

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now become so dense that they could not see the bow of the brig.

"The dog has seen the fog," said the captain, "and has come to tell us about it."

But that was not the only message the dog had come to bring them. There was clearly something more important on his mind; for resting his front paws on the taffrail he looked over the stern of the vessel and began howling mournfully.

"I don't like to see that, cap'in," cried Hiram; "sorter looks as though something has happened to the lads."

"Nor I," said the captain, "let's call the boys and tell them to come on board."

"That's right, cap'in," said Hiram. "I don't like the youngsters being out alone in this here fog." So they both shouted out at the top of their voices:

"Boat ahoy! Get ready to come on board."

To their great surprise no answer came from the boat. Both men, greatly alarmed, looked at each other with consternation, and both simultaneously took hold of the end of the rope to gradually draw the boat to the brig.

But there was no resistance. Instead of having a boat with two good-sized boys in it to pull toward the brig there was practically no resistance, and soon the end of the painter was in their hands.

"My God!" exclaimed the captain; "they are adrift in the fog."

"Let's shout," said Hiram; "it may be that they kin

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hear us, and ef they kin there orter be no trouble with the oars in the boat of their reaching us."

Both began calling out at the top of their voices:

"Boat ahoy! Boat ahoy!"

Hiram ran into the charthouse and brought out a fog-horn through which sounds ought to have been heard under ordinary conditions for half a mile or more, but no sound came from the ocean. If the boat was still floating with the boys in it, it was evidently at a great distance from the brig.

"I fear, Hiram," said the captain, "our dear boys are lost. I should never have given them permission to fish from the boat. It was very careless in my doing so, and I shall never forgive myself should harm come to them."

"Now, don't ye worry, sir," said Hiram. "Mr. Jack hez a good head and he allus takes it with him too; he don't lose it. He'll fetch the boat back, don't ye fear. And then again Master Harold's no baby. We'll see them boys again for sartin. Remember the boat kain't sink."

"Yes," replied the captain, "and remember too, we always keep plenty of water and food on the boat. You put it on this morning, Hiram, did you not, as usual?"

"Sartin," replied Hiram; "and the canned goods hev allus been thar since we built the boat, and I saw that both water-barrels were full this mornen."

In the meanwhile Rompey showed signs of intense excitement, and continued barking as loud as he could.

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He then, removing his front paws from the taffrail placed them successively on the shoulders of the two men, acting as though he was begging them to get the two boys.

"Look at the critter," said Hiram. "I'm hanged if the animal hasn't more sense than most men hev."

"What's the matter, Rompey?" inquired the captain turning to the dog.

Rompey replied by a prolonged mournful howl.

"Rompey," cried the captain, "where's Jack, where's Harold? Find them, Rompey, find them."

The poor animal looked for a moment at the captain again, and then without any further hesitation jumped overboard and soon disappeared in the fog in the wake of the vessel.

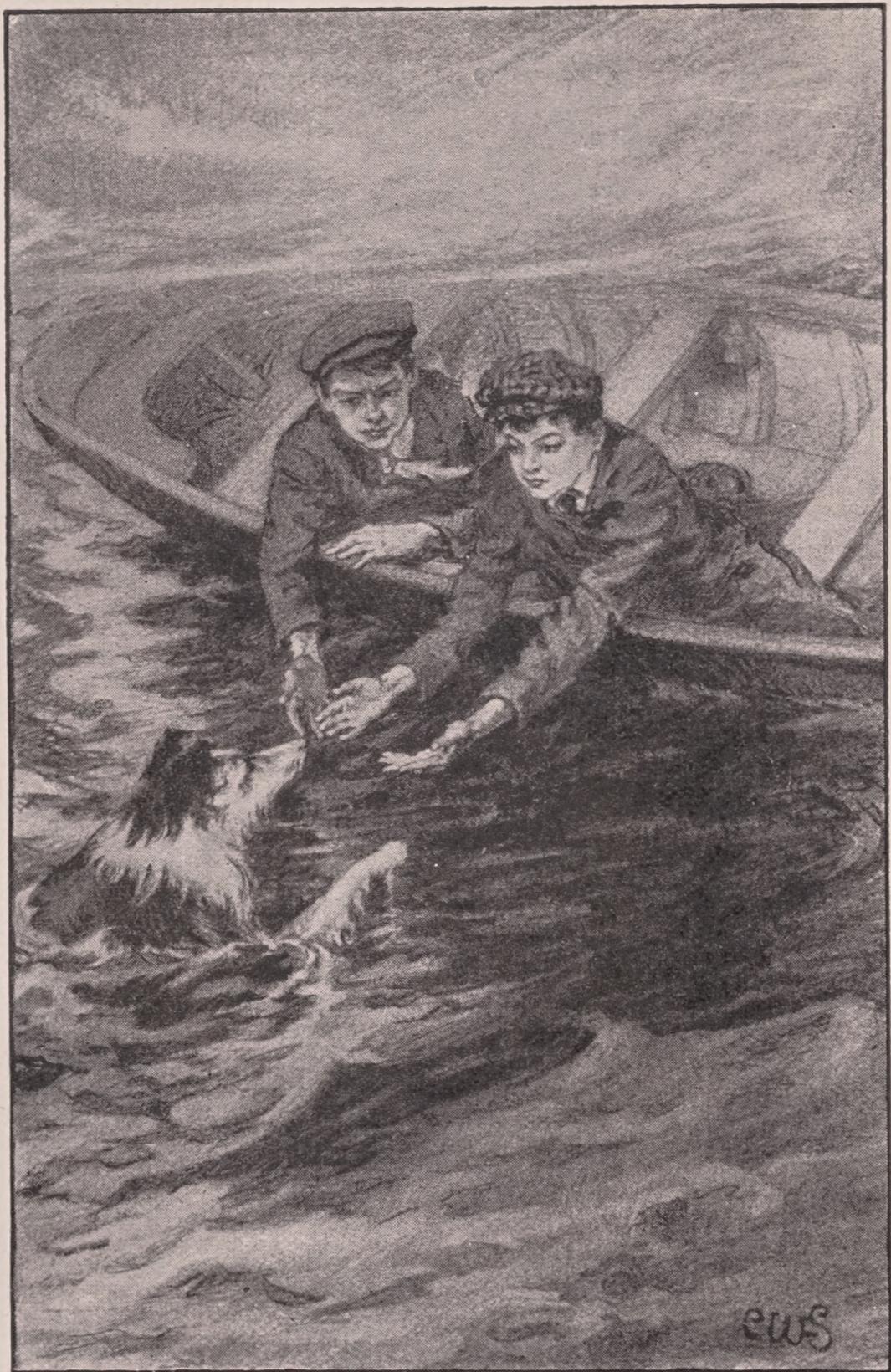
"Poor affectionate dog," cried the captain. "I didn't suppose for a moment he would jump overboard, Hiram. Let's arrange some form of light that we can show from the brig to give the boys some idea of where we are."

"All right, sir," was the reply; "but I'm afeered that no light ken shine very fur in this here fog."

They built a fire on the deck, being careful of course not to set fire to the deck or other part of the brig. They kept supplying it with fuel through the night without, however, seeing any signs of the boys.

After the boys had determined not to make any effort to row, they sat quietly in the boat peering eagerly in the direction in which it was drifting, ho-





*“He soon came up to the boat, the boys helping him in”*

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ping to see the brig. After a while Harold turned in an excited manner to his companion and said:

“Listen, Jack, I hear the barking of a dog.”

“You’re right, Harold, that’s Rompey’s bark. We must be near the brig. Let’s shout out again.”

So they continued crying:

“Brig ahoy! Brig ahoy!”

Rompey, who was swimming vigorously toward them, recognized their voices and now began barking in a louder and more joyful tone. He soon came up to the boat, the boys helping him in. The poor dog, who was almost exhausted by his long swim, yet tried his best by the waggings of his tail and the licking of their hands and faces, together with occasional barking, to show them how glad he was to be with them again.

“Where’s the captain, Rompey? Where’s Hiram?”

The dog looked into their faces and simply barked.

“I guess Rompey jumped into the ocean when he missed us. He has clearly been swimming for some time for, as you see, he appears to be nearly exhausted.”

“As Rompey came directly from the brig why can’t we row in the direction in which he approached us.”

“That’s a good idea, Harold, but I don’t remember in what direction he came. All I remember is that I heard his barking and saw him at one end of the boat, but I don’t know in what direction he approached us. Do you?”

“No,” said Harold, “I do not.”

They sat for a full hour in the boat with the dog between them, every now and then calling out to the brig. At last Harold turning to Jack said:

“Is there any water and food in the boat, Jack?”

“Yes, Harold,” was the reply, “there are both. You know the captain has always made it a rule since the boat was built to keep both food and water on it; for he said that we never knew when we might have to leave the brig suddenly. I remember only yesterday he told Hiram to be sure to keep a good supply of water and food on the boat. Indeed, I remember helping Hiram fill the two water-barrels with fresh water from the tank. I’ll get you a drink, Harold,” he continued, “but at the same time I think it would be a good idea if we both got something to eat.”

“I don’t feel much like eating, Jack,” said Harold. “I can’t forgive myself for meddling with that painter.”

“Now, Harold,” said Jack, “there’s no use continuing to worry about that. Worrying won’t do any good. Let’s look at it just as if it was a mistake. But let’s eat and keep our strength up, for we will probably need all the strength and courage we have before we get out of this dangerous position.”

Jack’s excellent advice was followed. At first neither of the boys cared much for eating, but somehow or other, when they once started to eat, their appetites grew and they did not stop until they had eaten a good, hearty meal, washed down with several good drinks of water. This meal, it is needless to say, was shared

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with Rompey who appeared to think that everything was right now that he was again with his young master.

The fog grew denser during the night, and the darkness finally became so intense that it was impossible for them to see the length of the boat.

Jack proposed that they take turns at sleeping, one to watch while the other slept, but Harold said :

“ I don’t care to take any sleep, Jack. You turn in and I’ll watch.”

But Jack refused to do this, so they both sat through the entire night with the dog between them.

Toward morning, although a dense fog still covered everything, the fact of the night being spent was shown by the darkness less dense. After breakfast while still sitting in the boat, Rompey jumped to his feet and began barking furiously. The boys noticed at once that it was not an angry bark, but a joyous bark.

“ Rompey scents the brig,” cried Harold and Jack. “ Let us both shout as loud as we can.” So they again began crying :

“ Brig ahoy! Brig ahoy!”

It seems that Rompey’s bark had been heard by the captain and Hiram who were still on deck keeping up the signal fire.

“ I hear ‘em, cap’in,” cried Hiram, “ that’s Rompey barken.”

While they listened the boys’ voices came out sharp and clear :

“ Brig ahoy! Brig ahoy!”

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"Thank God," exclaimed the captain, "there they are."

Before long the captain's and Hiram's shoutings were answered by the boys. As soon as the boys discovered the position of the brig by the direction of the voices they commenced rowing vigorously, and in a short time came in sight. A rope was thrown them which Jack made fast to a ring in the bow of the life-boat, and soon the men and the boys were hugging each other in joy at their meeting again.

"O Uncle Arthur," exclaimed Harold as soon as he could speak, "it was all my fault the painter broke loose. I was trying to see if I could make the same kind of a knot that Hiram made. I thought I had succeeded, but my knot was no good. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Captain," said Jack, "Harold has suffered greatly for his thoughtlessness in meddling with the painter. I hope you will forgive him, for he has been punished very severely already by his conscience."

"All right, Harold," said the captain, "only I'm sure you'll be careful never to let such a thing happen again. Hiram," continued the captain, "let's prepare breakfast."

"I will thet, sir," was the reply, "and I'll try to make this here breakfast one that we sha'n't forget, for this is such a day of joy wot don't come often into one's life. Go git the fish, boys, thet ye caught. I guess we kin enjoy them now."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE POST-BOXES OF THE SEA

THE narrow escape from lingering death in the open boat thoroughly dampened the boys' ardor for squid fishing, and although they occasionally threw the squids overboard it was always from the stern of the brig, for the security offered by the brig contrasted so strongly with that of the life-boat that they never again needlessly risked being alone in it. Of course, neither boy would have hesitated to go into the boat even alone if any matter of importance required it, but to do this merely to enjoy the sport of fishing was something they wisely determined not to indulge in. Consequently, they were more frequently together with the captain in the cabin or on deck, or in other parts of the brig with Hiram helping him in his work.

Harold had not forgotten the serious accident that almost resulted from his meddling with the painter of the life-boat. Although by no means contemplating the untying of ropes of this character, he endeavored to prevail upon Hiram to show him how properly to make the different kinds of knots.

"Sartin, Harold," remarked Hiram, when he had formally made the request. "Glad ter do so. I hev calculated to show ye how to make knots in ropes thet'll hold ever sense you made so bad a knot on the painter

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of the life-boat. While I go and look up some pieces of rope to larn ye with, go call Master Jack, for I might as well larn the two of ye together."

Hiram soon returned with several pieces of rope. Jack was much pleased when he heard what Hiram was going to do and came at once with Harold. Although an uneducated man, at least so far as his mother-tongue was concerned, Hiram was far better educated in the ways of the sea and in seamanship than most sailors. He was a good teacher and had bright boys for his pupils—boys who were anxious to learn what he was about to show them.

" My lads," he said, " don't fergit there be two pints about any sailor's good knot. The fust is to make a knot thet won't readily loosen or come untied when pulled, and the second pint is to make a knot thet won't jam, by which I means a knot thet kin easily be ontied when one wants to ontie it. Now these two things are so contrary and opposite, so to speak, thet I don't wonder a landsman can't easily git onto them. Ef course ye can understand when I tell ye that I know more than two hundred different kinds of knots thet I don't calc'late to larn ye all of 'em. I'll only pick out some of the importanter of them and larn ye 'em one at a time. When ye think ye can make 'em in these bits of rope I'm goin' to leave with you, bring 'em to me; ef I pass 'em we'll go on to the next knot, and ef I don't, back ye go with it and try it over agin until ye larn it."

Under this very sensible system of instruction in the

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art of knot-making, the boys soon learned how to make the most important of the knots that would hold fast when pulled against, and yet which could be easily unloosed when so desired. Quite naturally, Hiram began with knots especially intended to hold the ends of ropes like painters, and when Harold had brought him the knot of this character that passed his careful inspection, he said :

“ Now, my lad, ye know how to tie a fust-class knot of this kind ; but nevertheless, howsumever, don’t ye go monkeyin’ around eny painter knots thet the captain or I hev fixed, fer it’ll be some time afore ye kin make a knot as safe as a man kin.”

They had now been on the brig for more than two months, and had so settled down to their new life that everything was going on smoothly. The captain had become greatly interested in the manuscript of the book on the “ Physical Geography of the Sea,” before referred to, that Doctor Parsons had been preparing before, as the log of the brig declared, he had been swept overboard. The manuscript contained considerable gaps in certain places which the captain determined, as far as the limited possibilities of the brig would permit, to fill up. It was his intention, should they ever speak a passing vessel and so reach land, to proceed on his first opportunity to America to place the manuscript in the hands of the doctor’s heirs, and endeavor to make some arrangements with them for having the work published.

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The manuscript was especially deficient in the direction of the ocean currents in the Pacific, and the captain had evidently been carefully considering how he could best fill out this gap.

The spare time of the other members of the little crew was passed in various ways. The boys found no little enjoyment in reading the different books in the doctor's library, in playing with their animal friends to whom they became daily more and more attached, and in helping Hiram in his duties on the brig; for Hiram, not being able to spend his spare time in intellectual pursuits, was always finding something to do that was not included in his daily task. He had dried some of the wood from the hold in the vessel, and with the aid of the kit of carpenter's and cabinet-maker's tools he had made various ingenious contrivances for adding to their comfort on the brig.

To the average intelligent boy there is a fascination about the use of tools, especially of wood-working tools. This was especially true with both Jack and Harold, and when Hiram, seeing their great interest in this direction, offered to give them daily lessons in carpenter work and joinery, they gladly availed themselves of his offer.

There was one kind of employment that is very commonly resorted to by people who have more time on their hands than is necessary for their everyday work, and that is letter-writing. While such occupation might naturally be undertaken by people at sea where there is always a chance of meeting a vessel going in

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the opposite direction willing to exchange letters and forward them to their destinations, such of course was not the case on the brig. It is not surprising, therefore, that one day, as Jack suddenly went into the cabin to get a book from the library, he was astounded to find the captain writing something that certainly looked very much like a letter.

“Why, captain,” cried Jack in astonishment; “you are certainly not writing a letter, are you?”

The captain saw Jack’s surprise, and wishing to jolly him replied:

“Why yes, Jack, I’m writing a letter. Why should that surprise you?”

“I was only wondering, sir,” said Jack, “what you intended to do with the letter when you finished writing it.”

“Why, what should I do with it?” asked the captain still pretending not to understand him. “I’ll mail it, of course.”

At first Jack could hardly believe the evidence of his ears.

“Mail a letter in mid-ocean,” he thought. “Why what can have come over the captain.” And then the apprehension seized Jack’s mind that the responsibility or the loneliness to which the captain had been subjected was gradually breaking down his splendid mind.

Quite naturally these thoughts caused Jack’s face to assume such an appearance of mingled horror and pity that the captain could hardly refrain from laugh-

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ing outright. He conquered this desire, however, and simply said :

“ Jack, why are you looking at me in such a surprised and alarmed manner? Do you fear I am becoming weak-minded and am losing my powers of thought? ”

Jack, who had been thinking this very thing, blushed furiously and said :

“ I must have been mistaken, captain. I thought you said that you would mail this letter as soon as you finished writing it. I understand now that I must have mistaken you.”

“ Not at all,” replied the captain, still with difficulty keeping his face grave; “ I said I would mail this letter as soon as I finished it and I intend to do so. If you’ll help me you and I will mail it together.”

“ But where can we mail it, sir? ” Jack inquired still more surprised.

“ In the mail-boxes of the ocean,” said the captain.

Jack was now thoroughly convinced that the captain had lost his reasoning powers, so he inquired in an anxious tone: “ Are you feeling all right to-day, captain; can I do anything for you? ”

“ Only to help me prepare this letter for mailing,” the captain replied; and then seeing that his young friend was suffering from the awful thought that he had lost his mind he added: “ Now, Jack, there is no occasion for you to be at all worried. My mind is as strong as it ever was. Indeed, I think the long rest I’ve had together with the pleasant congenial work on the brig,

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have put my mind in better working condition than it has been at any time during the past fifteen years. Listen now and I'll tell you how we'll mail this letter as soon as I finish writing it.

"See here," he continued, picking up a large, strong, and thoroughly dry bottle that was laying on the cabin table near a stout, strong cork; "when I have finished writing and have dried this letter, I will loosely roll it up in this manner," he said. "As soon as the letter has dried I will place it in the bottle thus, and I will seal the bottle water-tight with this cork, driving it into the bottle with this wooden mallet, and will then cut off all the cork that projects above the top of the bottle and will make a water-tight seal with this sealing-wax," all of which he did, closely watched by Jack.

"Now," he continued, placing the bottle on the table, "as soon as the seal has thoroughly cooled we will take the bottle and going to the deck of the brig will throw it overboard from the stern. The bottle will remain floating as long as the water is kept out of it and, since it cannot leak and the chances are all against anything striking it and breaking it, it should remain floating for months or even for years unless it is picked up at sea or found on the coast of some island or continent against which it is washed by the waves."

"Oh," said Jack, "now I understand what you mean by the post-boxes of the sea."

At this time Harold's steps were heard descending the companionway.

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"Please don't say anything to Harold, captain," said Jack, "I want to see how surprised he will be when he learns what you have been doing."

As soon as Harold came into the cabin Jack said:

"Harold, you and I have not written any letters for a long time. What do you say to each of us writing a letter and letting our friends know where we are?"

Instead of being at all alarmed as to Jack's condition of mind, Harold at once concluded that his friend was kidding him, so he said in a laughing tone:

"There's no hurry about that, Jack. I think we will wait until the next mail leaves this part of the world."

"But, Harold," said Jack, "I have just learned from the captain that in this part of the ocean the mail collections are so frequent that they are ready to receive the mail any time it is ready to go."

"Do you hear the nonsense Jack is giving me, Uncle Arthur?" said Harold laughingly to the captain. "Did you ever hear such nonsense?"

"Why, where's the nonsense, Harold?" inquired his uncle still keeping his face grave; "Jack is perfectly correct. The mail collections here are just as he said, made any time the mail is ready to be sent."

"Oh, come now, uncle," said Harold with a loud laugh, "you surely don't think I'm as easy as that, do you? Please explain yourself."

The captain then told Harold what he had been doing and showed him the rolled paper inside the

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tightly sealed bottle, and then explained what he and Jack intended to do with it.

Harold was greatly interested when he heard the captain's explanation.

"Have you a copy of the letter you placed in that bottle, Uncle Arthur?" he inquired.

"Yes," said the captain opening the table drawer; "here it is. I'll read it to you." He then read the following:

Latitude — N., longitude — W., from Greenwich. This bottle was thrown overboard on the — day of — [then followed the date and year]. If found please mail enclosed letter to the United States Hydrographic Office, Washington, D. C.

ARTHUR HARDING.

"You see, boys," he continued, "I do this for the purpose of obtaining information concerning the directions of the constant ocean currents in this part of the Pacific. I have been studying the manuscript of the book on the 'Physical Geography of the Sea,' written by my old friend Doctor Parsons."

"Captain," said Jack as soon as the captain was through speaking, "won't you send another letter telling about the loss of the Ketrel? You can thus let them know that our boat was separated from the others, and that after passing five days on the ocean in the storm, we were wrecked by a derelict brig on which we are now comfortably and safely placed with plenty of food and water."

"I have already done that, Jack," said the captain, "but I will do it again. Come," he said, "let's pre-

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pare the letter. Here, Jack, write it on this piece of paper with this ink that is especially made for the purpose."

The captain then dictated the latitude, longitude, and date of the month and the year, and added the following:

The ship Ketrel from Liverpool, bound for Yokohama, Japan, was wrecked on the — [then giving the date and year], in the China Sea in — [giving the latitude and longitude]. The ship's sides being badly damaged by the rigging and masts that were blown overboard during the storm, let in water and the ship commenced rapidly to sink. All on board were safely transferred to the boats that, after seeing the ship sink, made for the China coast with the largest boat, commanded by Capt. Wm. M. Parker, in the lead, and the last boat in charge of Lieut. Arthur Harding following. During a second storm which lasted for about five days the boats were separated. The boat in command of Lieutenant Harding was struck during a dark night of the fifth day by a derelict brig. Two of the party in this boat were swept overboard, but the remaining four—Lieutenant Harding, Hiram Higgenbotham, the boatswain of the Ketrel, Harold Arthur Harding, a nephew of Lieutenant Harding, and John Parker Jackson, a ward of Wm. M. Parker—reached the brig in safety, on which they are now comfortably located with an abundance of food and water. This bottle was thrown overboard from the brig. If found, please forward to the English embassy, Yokohama, Japan, to George Harding.

When Jack finished writing the letter it was carefully dried, rolled up, and inserted in another bottle that the captain prepared for the purpose. The bottle was then corked, but before being sealed in order to throw overboard, Jack said:

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"Captain, the bottle is almost sure to float cork upward, is it not?"

"Yes, Jack," replied the captain; "look at the bottom of the bottle. As you can see, the glass is much thicker there than on the sides, so that the greater weight of the bottom will make the bottle float cork upward."

"Then," said Jack, "before sealing the cork wouldn't it be a good idea to attach a little white flag to a slender piece of strong oak and seal it with the cork in the top of the bottle. Then as the bottle floats the flag will be caught by the wind and waving from the top of the bottle will be apt to attract the attention of any passing vessel."

"Jack, that is a very ingenious plan," said the captain. "We will certainly try it."

"Then wait, captain," said Harold, "I'll run and ask Hiram to come and let you tell him what we want to do."

When Hiram, who shortly afterward entered the cabin with Harold, was told Jack's plan he said:

"Wall, Mr. Jack, that's sartinly a bright idee. I'll go to my kit of tools and cut a piece of oak for the flagstaff," and then turning to the captain he said: "Cap'in, if you have any waterproof linen, cut out a small flag from it and put a hem on the edges so that it kain't fray."

When everything was ready the two bottles were thrown overboard from the stern of the brig. The bottle with the flag was first thrown overboard. It

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disappeared for a moment, but soon reappeared floating cork upward, and being caught in the current followed in the wake of the brig. In a few minutes the material of the flag was dried by the wind and began to flutter in the breeze, for the wind was blowing directly toward the stern of the vessel.

After waiting for a few minutes the bottle first prepared was thrown overboard, and like the flag-bottle was soon seen floating after the brig.

As they stood watching the bottles with their glasses Jack exclaimed :

“ See, Harold, the flag-bottle is moving somewhat faster than the flagless bottle. It is gradually increasing its distance from the flagless bottle, for the wind is acting on it more powerfully than on the other and is driving it ahead.”

“ Uncle Arthur,” inquired Harold as they afterward returned to the cabin, “ won’t you place in all the bottles you throw overboard an account of the shipwreck of the Ketrel, the fate of the boats, and the statement of our position on the brig? Jack and I will prepare a number of these statements, leaving only the latitude, longitude, and the date to be filled in, and then we’ll put one of these in each of the bottles you throw overboard.”

“ The idea is an excellent one, Harold,” exclaimed the captain. “ I will be very glad to adopt it.”

“ I suppose,” said Jack, “ that Captain Parker has thrown bottles overboard containing accounts of the wrecking of the Ketrel, the sinking of the vessel, and

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the transferring of the crew to the boats. Don't you think so?" he added, addressing the captain.

"I know he did, Jack," was the reply. "I saw him preparing a letter relating to the wrecking of the ship and his intention of transferring the crew to the boats. I have no doubt that after this another such letter was thrown overboard from the boats. In which case the letter would contain an account of the missing of our boat."

"And such a bottle," said Harold in an excited tone, "might possibly be found by us floating in the ocean."

"It might," said the captain, "though I don't think it probable."

"Then," said Harold to Jack, "let us keep on the lookout for such a bottle."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A SEAQUAKE

DURING the chilly afternoons and evenings of the North Pacific Ocean—for the brig was now in latitude 50° N.—they found the cabin so warm and comfortable that they spent much of their time there talking to the captain or reading. At this time the captain, having reached that portion of the manuscript of Doctor Parsons' book relating to this point, was greatly interested in studying the depths of the ocean. As he was unable to make any direct measurements, since this would have required the stopping of the brig, he had contented himself by comparing the charts prepared by the doctor with information contained in various books in the library.

One afternoon when they had retired to the cabin at a somewhat earlier hour, the captain explained to the boys a chart of the Pacific Ocean that was spread out on the table and on which were marked by different shades of blue, the depths of different parts. When he had completed this explanation Jack said:

“Captain, I thought that the bed of the ocean was almost flat,—that the long time during which sediment had gradually been gathering had filled the hollows and made the bed an almost level plain; but this map shows that the bottom is exceedingly uneven.”

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“ That’s right, Jack,” replied the captain. “ The ocean’s floor is far from level. It has its mountains, hills, plains, and hollows and, although its surface is more regular than the surface of the land, still it is far from being a flat level plain. On the contrary, large portions of the ocean are very shallow, perhaps less than a mile or two in depth, while others are three, four, five, and even more than six miles in depth. This has been determined by careful soundings which show that portions of its bed are characterized by vast plateaus and plains forming what are called floors. Besides this the ocean has its submerged mountain ranges, the summits of which form island chains. In addition to this there are portions called caldrons, the slopes of which are deep and abrupt; portions called troughs that are marked by narrow and shallow depressions; and still other portions called shoals where the water is less than five fathoms or thirty feet in depth.”

Harold, who had been listening to the captain, was evidently surprised when he heard that some portions of the ocean were over six miles in depth, and inquired how it was possible to measure such great depths, adding that he imagined that an ordinary line with a lead plummet could hardly be used for the purpose.

“ You are correct, Harold,” was the reply. “ Such a plummet would take so long to sink that before it reached the bottom the undercurrents would carry it to great distances from where it was sunk.”

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"Then how do they manage to measure such great depths?" he inquired.

"By means of a sounding apparatus devised by Sigsbee, in which in order to decrease the resistance of a thick line, a thin steel wire is employed, somewhat similar to that used for the strings of pianos. To this line is attached a heavy cannon-ball, so arranged that when it strikes the bottom, which is known by the shock transmitted through the wire, the ball falls off and the wire is then readily pulled to the surface. Since the heavy balls fall rapidly through the water the error produced by the action of the under-currents is almost entirely avoided."

The statement that there were extended regions in the ocean where the water was comparatively shallow evidently was a great surprise to Jack, so he asked the captain if he would not point out on the map of the Pacific Ocean before referred to, in what part of this ocean such extended shallow regions existed.

"Certainly," was the reply, and picking up a long straight ruler he said, "If I place the upper edge of one end of this ruler against the southern point of South America, and the upper part of the other end against the northern part of Nippon, the largest of the Japan islands, it will pass through most of the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Now you can see by examining the map, the water here is generally shallow, and is occupied by a huge plateau or level tract bearing a number of parallel mountain chains, the tops of which form the islands of this part of the Pacific.

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In some parts however, of this district, the waters are far from shallow, the islands rising abruptly from profound depths."

"Is the part of the ocean over which the brig is now drifting very deep?" asked Jack.

"It is. While we were moving through the masses of floating wrack or kelp we were over a submerged plateau bearing a mountain range, the tops of which formed the Aleutian Islands, but as you know we are now considerably to the south of this region in a portion of the ocean where the water is very deep."

"About how deep?" inquired Harold.

"The brig is now drifting in water that is at least four miles deep."

Just as the captain had pronounced these words they were surprised by suddenly feeling a blow as if the brig had struck against the bottom of the ocean. It was a grating sound as if the keel was sliding over a rocky bottom. The sound was accompanied by a shaking sufficiently severe to throw several small objects in the cabin a short distance upward into the air.

"The brig has struck against a sunken rock, captain," cried Jack.

"It seems so, Jack, and yet I can't understand it. All the charts show that the ocean is quite deep at this place."

At this moment Hiram came running down the companionway and cried to the captain:

"As uv course ye've heerd, sir, we seem to hev struck a sunken reef."

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Before the captain could answer Hiram there followed two additional shocks not quite so severe as the first, and then immediately a heavy rumbling sound was heard as if coming from the bottom of the ocean.

"It's no reef, Hiram," exclaimed the captain. "That sounds more like an earthquake, or," he said turning to the boys, "more correctly, a seaquake. However, let's go on deck at once and see if the brig has been injured."

On reaching the deck they looked in all directions for signs of reefs or shoals. There was no fog. The sun was still shining, so they could see distinctly in all directions, but nothing like reefs was in sight.

The rumbling sounds were again heard louder than before and they could see a low wave moving in every direction outward from the vessel.

"It's a seaquake, Hiram, beyond any doubt," cried the captain.

"It came so sudden, cap'in," said Hiram, "thet I war skeered, sure. Says I to myself, 'We've struck a rock or reef, or mebbe another derelict.' Then I looked over the sides to see ef the brig was hurt and then I ran to you. I calc'late I better go below and see ef the water is any higher in the lower hold."

"All right," said the captain, "perhaps that might be as well, but I'm sure that it was only a seaquake that apparently started almost immediately under the brig."

Again, as if in confirmation of the captain's remark, they heard another series of rumbling sounds. The

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brig was again violently shaken, and sounds were heard as if the keel was scraping against the bottom.

This time, however, these sounds were followed by a terrific noise that appeared to come from the north. This sound, besides being very intense, was prolonged for several minutes, it probably being produced as the captain remarked, by a number of explosions following one another with such rapidity as to produce an almost continuous roar.

"There is no doubt about what that is," said the captain to Hiram, as he came back to report that the water in the lower hold was at the same height, and that as far as he could see no damage had occurred to the brig. "It is a volcanic eruption on one of the Aleutian Islands."

"You're sartinly right, cap'in," said Hiram. "It comes from one of them islands thet lie on the north. I've heerd tell there be a-many volcanoes thar."

"Had the earthquake shocks anything to do with the volcanic eruption, captain?" asked Jack.

"Yes, there is an undoubted connection between volcanoes and earthquakes. Explosive volcanic eruptions are especially apt to occur after long periods of rest, when the volcano is generally believed to have become quite extinct. In such cases earthquake shocks are apt to precede the eruption," and then turning to Harold he said: "Harold, get the glasses, please. We will then be better able to see what is going on in the islands."

As they focused the glasses on the distant islands

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they could distinctly see a huge column of fire from one of them that was shot upward into the air for a distance probably of several miles.

As they continued watching the column through the glasses they saw a blackish cloud that began to spread in all directions.

“That’s the ashes falling,” said Jack to Harold.

“Yes,” replied the captain, “and there is an upper wind that is blowing that cloud directly toward the vessel.”

“It looks as if it would be here before long,” said Harold.

In about three-quarters of an hour the cloud of ashes had spread in all directions completely obscuring the sun and causing a darkness equal to that of night. They could now see in the direction of the volcano a lurid reddish light, due both to the red-hot ashes that were thrown up from the crater, and a column of molten lava which they could see as a tiny streak reaching down the side of the mountain toward the ocean.

It bothered Harold no little when he noticed the speed with which the ashes were being carried from the volcano directly toward the brig.

“I don’t understand that,” he exclaimed. “The wind here is blowing directly toward the mountain and yet the ashes are blowing directly toward the brig.”

“That’s due to the action of the upper-current, Harold,” explained the captain. “When the air at the surface is blowing in a certain direction there is always an upper-current flowing in the opposite direc-

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tion. It is like the undercurrents in the ocean. Were it not for these opposite currents all the air or the water would tend to collect in one part of the earth."

There was one phenomenon attending the eruption that deeply impressed itself on the minds of both boys. As the ashes were being swiftly carried through the air by the wind, gradually cutting off the light of the sun, long before the sun was entirely obscured, its disk took on a beautiful blood-red color.

"Look at the sun, Jack," cried Harold, for its light was so diminished by the suspended ashes that they could look at it directly without blinking. "Looks as if it had been turned into blood, don't it? I wonder what that's the sign of," he continued to Jack.

"It's a sign that ashes are in the air," said Jack.

"What do you say it's the sign of, Hiram?" said Harold turning to the boatswain.

"Wall, Mr. Harold," was the reply, "I've always heerd my messmates say that when one sees so much blood in the sun it's a very bad sign, but if as Mr. Jack says it can be splained by ashes floatin' in the air, then I hold that the bad sign falls."

Hiram saw that Harold was poking fun at him and, moreover, he was gradually learning that many of the things he had heretofore looked on as portending bad luck were matters that could be explained on very simple principles, so he gave Harold the above answer.

"I'm glad to hear you talk that way, Hiram," said the captain. "It is much more sensible. When a thing can be explained in a simple manner it is surely un-

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necessary to attempt to give it any other explanation."

"I calc'late you're right there," was the reply.

The darkening of the sky gradually increased, and at last showers of ashes began to fall on the deck of the brig.

"Why, they are quite warm," said Harold feeling them.

"Yes," said the captain, "and had we been nearer to the volcano we might have found them hot enough to set the deck on fire."

"Do you think they will continue falling for some time?" inquired Jack.

"The chances are that they will," was the reply. "It is not uncommon during great volcanic eruptions, especially of the explosive type, to have such quantities of ashes fall from the sky as to cover the land for hundreds of miles around to a depth of many feet. Indeed, during some volcanic eruptions these ashes have collected in such great quantities on the roofs of houses as to break them by the great weight."

As the captain had predicted, the fall of ashes continued. They accumulated on the deck of the brig in such quantities, that fearing the weight would cause the brig to sink too low in the water, they began the laborious work of shoveling them off, using for this purpose the shovels they found among the hardware stored on the brig. It was hard work and, moreover, work they were obliged to keep up for nearly six hours. At first, shovel as hard as they could, the ashes gained on them, but at last the fall decreased and

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finally, after very hard work, they had the deck entirely cleared. The ash-storm had ceased with the exception of a fall of fine volcanic ashes.

"This is a different kind of stuff from the other," said Harold; "is it not, uncle?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied the captain, "this is not called volcanic ashes but volcanic dust. You remember," he continued, "my telling you that during the great eruption of Krakatoa, when the ashes were thrown many miles up into the air, the finer particles were carried by the wind to widely distant parts of the earth and produced most gorgeous red sunsets and sunrises. If the weather continues clear I think we will see for many days a crimson or bloody sun as well as beautiful sunrises and sunsets."

They had been so busy clearing the deck of ashes that they had very little opportunity of examining the ocean. Now, however, when they did they were surprised to find the surface of the water covered with a thick layer of ashes and pumice-stone. Indeed, this layer appeared so dense that it almost looked as if one could walk on the water.

Hiram laughed when Harold suggested this probability and said:

"Why, my lad, that thar stuff won't even hold the weight of a bucket. See here," he added, "I'll convince ye of that," and taking the bucket that he employed for getting water from the ocean, he slung it into the pumice surface, keeping hold of course to the end of the rope.

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The bucket slowly sank through the mass, although in order to keep it floating he was obliged to pull the rope so that it would rest on its side in the mass. In this way he soon filled it with the ashes and brought a bucketful on deck.

There were two kinds of material in the bucket; a lot of fine volcanic dust, and blocks or pieces of more or less tenacious material filled with innumerable air-holes.

"This here stuff," said Hiram, picking up a piece of the solid cellular substance, "is called pumey-stone."

The material was so odd-looking that Jack took a piece of it to the captain and asked him about it.

"It is a variety of lava, called pumice-stone," replied the captain, "so filled with air-bubbles as to be much lighter than water. It consists of a kind of volcanic glass that is much heavier than water when in a solid state. When, however, it is drawn out into fine thread-like masses it contains so many air-bubbles that it floats on the water. You can form some idea of the extent of this division when I tell you that in some varieties there are only one and three-quarters cubic inches of glass in one cubic foot of pumice-stone."

"I understand," said Jack, "it's a kind of froth produced in melted lava."

As the boys stood looking at the thick mass of pumice-stone and ashes that were floating on the sea, Jack remarked:

"If ashes fall on the land in the neighborhood of a

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volcano in large quantities it might change a fertile land into a desert region, is this not so, captain?"

"You are right, Jack, though only to a certain extent," said the captain. "At first, the effects of a large fall of ashes is to render a fertile region a desert, but the finely divided state of the ashes permits them rapidly to undergo decomposition, thus producing an exceedingly fertile soil. Eventually, therefore, the region becomes much more fertile than before. Do you know, Jack," he continued, "that some of the wheat fields of the United States and Canada, on which enormous crops are raised, have a soil that is formed entirely of the showers of ashes that attended the eruption of the many extinct volcanoes that are found in various parts of the United States west of the Mississippi River? Come into the library and I'll give you some facts from one of the most recent books that I find in the doctor's library."

When they went into the cabin the captain gave them the following facts from a book called, "The Volcanoes of North America," by Russell.

According to this authority heavy showers of volcanic dust have fallen during geological times for the greater part shortly before the appearance of man on the earth. Some of these, however, were coeval with man. Such deposits cover enormous areas in Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas. These deposits in Nebraska in some portions reach a great depth of fifty feet.

Somewhat similar deposits occur in portions of

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California and Nevada, as well as in parts of Oregon and Washington. In the latter region a fine deposit of pure white volcanic dust covers an area of at least ten thousand square miles in southeastern Washington and the adjoining States.

“Besides the above,” he continued, “similar ash showers have covered portions of Alaska and Canada. Some of these occurred within historical times.

“One of the most remarkable deposits of volcanic dust was examined by Hayes in 1881. It appears from this examination, as well as from subsequent surveys, that an area of fully fifty-two thousand two hundred and eighty square miles was covered by the deposit of volcanic dust, varying from two inches in depth on its northwestern border to between seventy-five and a hundred feet near its southwestern border. It is a curious fact, that the locality of the volcano from which this dust was derived is not yet known. It appears probable, however, that it was situated in a region about seventy-five miles northwest of Mount St. Elias.”

As the captain had predicted, the next few days, which happened to be clear, were characterized by beautiful sunsets and sunrises and blood-red suns.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### CASTOR AND POLLUX

THE brig was now drifting lazily in the waters of the North Pacific, south of the Tropic of Cancer. Many weeks had passed since the seaquake and the explosive volcanic eruption in one of the Aleutian Islands. Every day was taking them farther and farther south.

Both the captain and Hiram, who had feared that the brig would drift into the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific, were greatly pleased to have escaped this danger.

"Well, Hiram," exclaimed the captain, "there is no longer any danger of our drifting into the Sargasso Sea."

"There beant, cap'in," was the reply, "and I'm very glad fer it."

Harold was not glad, but did not say anything.

Had they been left entirely to the North Equatorial Current of the Pacific they would have continued drifting to the west and might eventually have been drawn into the center of the Sargasso Sea, but about this time they encountered a number of storms which, together with the Northeast Trades, carried them out of their course into the Equatorial Counter Current of the Pacific, and eventually into the regions in the immediate neighborhood of the Equator.

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Their passage through the Northeast Trade zone was not an entirely novel experience to the boys. They had already passed through this zone while the Ketrel was in the waters of the North Atlantic, and through the similar zone of the Southeast Trades while passing through the South Atlantic. But like all people accustomed to living in such climates as England, where the wind seldom continues to blow in the same direction for any considerable time, and where the climate frequently changes with great rapidity during a single day, they were surprised to find in the zone of the Northeast Trades, which the brig had now entered, that the wind continued to blow constantly day and night from the northeast.

There is an agreeable freshness in the air of the Trade Winds due to its comparative dryness. Although in these regions the air is laden with moisture, yet it is relatively dry; for, blowing as it does toward the Equator, its temperature, and consequently its capacity for moisture, are constantly increasing. It therefore seldom reaches even the neighborhood of its dew-point, or its point of saturation. The air takes rather than gives moisture to the objects against which it blows, and therefore produces an agreeable sensation of cooling when it blows against the body, owing to the rapidity with which its moisture is evaporated.

The air on deck was so pleasant that they spent most of their spare time in either reading or talking under an awning that Hiram had rigged up over a portion of the stern. He had no little difficulty at first in find-

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ing a suitable support for the awning as well as for the distress signal they always kept flying in order to attract the attention of passing vessels.

Hiram had repeatedly searched among the stores of the brig, and through the piles of lumber in the hold, to see if he could not find a spare spar or mast with which he could rig up some kind of sail in order to direct the course of the vessel. Of course he knew that since the rudder-post had been swept away there would be much difficulty in rigging up a jury rudder. He thought, however, that if he could find a spar he might arrange a makeshift for steering the vessel. But no matter how carefully he searched, there was nothing whatever on the brig that could be employed even as an apology for a mast. However, after considerable thought and consultation with the captain he constructed four posts consisting of trussed beams, which were erected on the middle of the deck between the stern and the position of the mizzen mast. These posts were placed ten feet apart at the four corners of a square, and connected securely at their tops by a similar trussed beam thus forming a space of ten by ten which afforded an agreeable shade when covered with a piece of sailcloth. The flagpole consisted of another trussed beam firmly secured to the top beams. On the erection of this structure, a lantern with a white light, as well as the distress signal originally placed at the end of the bowsprit, were placed.

While the contrivance answered fairly well for the support of a small flag, yet it was evident that it

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would prove of but little value for carrying a sail. It did, however, answer admirably for the support of the awning which was suitably secured to the under surface of the horizontal beams. Since both the dog and the parrot insisted on being in their company when under the awning, Harold had attached a wooden perch to one of the uprights for the convenience of Satan.

The brig was now again drifting nearer to the Equator, and a marked change was observed in the atmosphere. Instead of the cool, refreshing breeze that quickly dried everything with which it came in contact, the almost windless air was now damp and humid, and so saturated with vapor that it was unable even slowly to dry wet clothes. Since the human body is largely dependent for its loss of heat on the rapid evaporation of moisture from its surface, the air striking their bodies gave no relief whatever; for being already as full of vapor as it could be it was unable to carry off the film of perspiration that constantly covered their bodies, and, being of an exceedingly high temperature, made them thoroughly uncomfortable. Indeed, the air of the cabin was almost intolerable, and often when the captain and the boys had turned in for the night, after standing the oppressive air as long as they could, they quietly went one by one to the upper deck, where, although very hot, the air was somewhat less stifling.

The portion of the ocean through which the brig was now drifting is known as the doldrums, or the

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region of the equatorial calms. As you might suppose from the name, this part of the ocean has long periods during which wind is almost entirely absent. At these times the surface of the sea takes on the appearance of a huge area of smooth glass. At times, however, the calm is followed by terrific winds or storms that often die out as rapidly as they rise. These storms are characterized by very high winds and seas, and by the presence of a very large quantity of free electricity in the air. The lightning is, therefore, much more terrific here than in the temperate regions, the separate flashes succeeding one another so rapidly that the accompanying peals of thunder, being almost continuous, produce a prolonged and awful roaring.

One evening, when the vessel had been passing for several days through the doldrums, they found the air of the cabin so almost unbearable that after trying in vain to sleep they dressed themselves and went on deck. There was no moon, the heavens were partially covered with clouds, so that the night was quite dark. After sitting for about half an hour Harold, looking at Jack, exclaimed in surprise:

“Look at Jack, Uncle Arthur; look at his head. He seems to be on fire.”

A glance at Jack’s head surprised the captain, although not so much as it did Harold, for there appeared around the lad’s head a glow of fire not unlike the halo of light sometimes represented by the old artists as surrounding the heads of the saints. It certainly made Jack look as if he was on fire.

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Seeing that Jack was no little disturbed at the manner in which his companions were looking at him, the captain said :

“ There is no reason to be alarmed, Jack. We are merely examining an electric discharge known as a brush discharge which is going on between you and the electricity in the air. There appears to be an unusually heavy charge of electricity in the air to-night, and, since your body is a good electric conductor, a discharge is taking place between the air and the portion of your body farthest from the ground ; that is, from your head. In other words, Jack,” he continued laughing, “ you are a kind of a lightning-rod, and provided the discharge does not take place too rapidly there is no danger.”

“ I’d like to see the glow,” said Jack ; “ but I can’t very well look at my own head without a looking-glass, and there is none here.”

“ Hold your hand above your head,” said the captain, “ and you will probably see a discharge at the ends of your fingers.”

As Jack did this the ends of his fingers assumed a ghastly appearance, for tongues of fire could be seen spreading in all directions into the air.

As these discharges were taking place they could hear a somewhat musical or buzzing sound, not unlike the sound produced by the rapid flight of very small birds through the air.

“ These sounds,” said the captain, “ are common in electric discharges of this character. They are due to

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the fact that brush discharges are not continuous, but consist of a number of separate discharges following one another very rapidly, thus producing a more or less musical tone."

In a short time the streamings of fire appeared around the heads of Harold and the captain as well as Jack's.

"These discharges are very different from those of a lightning flash, are they not?" said Jack addressing the captain.

"Yes," was the reply, "they differ greatly; for in a lightning flash practically all the discharge occurs suddenly in what is called a disruptive discharge. This discharge passes so rapidly through the air that it produces a vacuum into which the surrounding air rushes making a thunderclap, but the discharges that are taking place from our heads and hands are almost constantly occurring, so the intervals between the successive discharges are very short. Moreover, the amount of the electricity is comparatively small."

While they were sitting talking about the glow discharges of the electricity around their heads, Hiram came running up to the captain. He was evidently greatly alarmed. So the captain inquired:

"What's the matter, Hiram?"

Hiram asking them to come from under the canvas, exclaimed in an excited tone:

"A corposant is a setting on each of them posts, and another on the top of the flagstaff. I seed them as I was comin' out of the galley."

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Sure enough, there were still larger globes of lambent flames streaming from the points Hiram had mentioned. The light was of a pale blue color, and instead of remaining quietly in the same places moved about, but kept generally near the tops of the vertical posts.

"I was skeered, sir," said Hiram to the captain, "when I fust saw that globe of fire; for there was only one of them, which, ez every sailor knows, means the wust kind of bad luck, but I felt glad when I arterwards saw the hull five of them."

The captain smiled when he heard what Hiram had to say, and asked him whether he believed in the superstitions connected with corposants, or as he told the boys these things were more frequently called, St. Elmo's fires.

"Yes," cap'in, I believe in them sartin."

"Hiram," said Jack, "won't you tell me what sailors believe St. Elmo's fires indicate?"

"Sartin, Mr. Jack. All sailors is agreed that 'em lights come from bodies of speerits wot visit the ship. When only one light is seed it means bad luck to all on the vessel, but when two or more comes they brings the vessel good luck."

"Well," said Jack smiling, "then since there are five of them on the brig that means good luck, does it not?"

"Sartin, Mr. Jack, fer this is what ye'll find every sailor believes."

"And," inquired Harold mischievously, "since be-

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sides the five you see on the posts there is another on the bowsprit, then that means still better luck."

"That's true, Mr. Harold," said Hiram in a satisfied tone.

"And," continued Harold, "you may add to the six four others."

"Where be they?" inquired Hiram, looking in every direction but the right one.

"Well," said the lad, "if you will look at our heads you will see a St. Elmo's fire on each of them."

Hiram's attention being drawn to this he had no difficulty in observing the faint glow that was still playing around the heads of his companions. There was something in the appearance that Hiram evidently regarded as being especially awful, for his face took on a horrified expression at which all of his companions could not restrain from laughing aloud.

"What alarms you, Hiram?" inquired Jack.

"It is the ghost lights or the corposants that I see gleaming on your heads," he replied.

"Is it a bad sign?" inquired Harold.

"Oh, the wust kind of a sign," he replied. "Generally when them things is seed over a man's head it means he's goin' to die soon."

"Then look out, Hiram," exclaimed Jack mischievously, "if that is so, your time is come, for there is a big one that is settling down on your head."

When Hiram heard what Jack had said he evidently became very greatly alarmed, but believing that the lad was only teasing him he said:

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"I don't believe it, Mr. Jack. You're a foolin' me."

"Then hold your hand before your nose," said Jack, "and look at it."

As Hiram did this the ghostly flame could be seen passing between the nose and the finger.

"I fear my time hez come," he remarked in a horrified tone.

"Now, Hiram," said the captain, "I'm surprised that so bright a man should believe such nonsense. What is generally believed by the sailors when more than two of these ghost lights appear at the same time?"

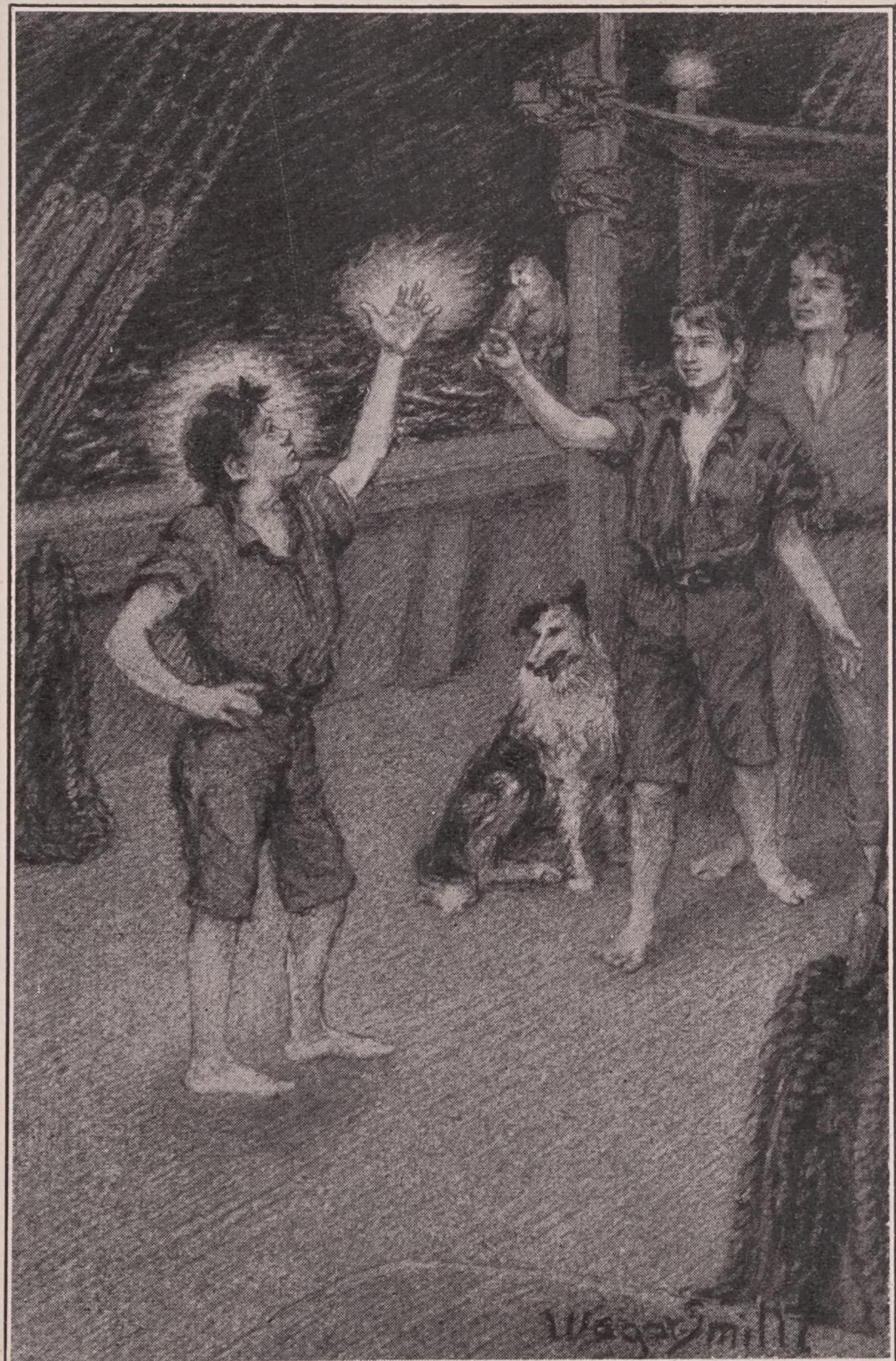
"That good luck has come to the ship," replied Hiram.

"Well," said the captain, "and here we have six of these lights on different parts of the brig. That ought to be six pieces of good luck. Now surely, Hiram, six pieces of good luck should be able to beat the four pieces of bad luck from the ghost light appearing over each of us. Should it not?"

This explanation, ridiculous as it was, appeared entirely to satisfy Hiram.

"Yes, cap'in," he replied, "I kain't deny that. Them's what I call mathematics, and mathematics is mathematics for sartin."

They stood on the deck watching the electrical display for half an hour or longer. The amount of free electricity in the air was so great that the ghost lights were sometimes seen playing over the crest of the waves. Hiram, who had by this time regained his



*“They stood on the deck watching the  
electrical display”*

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courage, said that sailors always believed that lights playing on the water only appeared over places where people had been drowned.

"Hiram," inquired the captain, "have you ever heard of Castor and Pollux?"

"Offen, sir," was the reply.

"Then tell the story to the boys; I'm sure they would like to hear it."

"Sartinly," was the reply. "Castor and Pollux, my lads," he said, "is the name wot sailors give when two of them corposants or ghost lights come on board a vessel. When two appear they allus bring the vessel good luck, and ef it so be that thar is a storm at thet time it means that the storm will soon break and nary one be injured. But ef only one be seed, then look out fer bad luck, fer it means that some harm will come to the vessel."

"Can you tell us anything about these strange lights, uncle?" inquired Harold.

"Yes, come down into the cabin and I will read to you some of the things I was reading the other day. Come with us, Hiram, there's nothing you can do here, and I will read to you some things from the books of the doctor about these lights."

When they reached the library he opened one of the books and said:

"Here's what Erasmus, one of the noted Christian writers, had to say about these appearances:

"A certain ball of fire began to stand by the mast which is the worst sign in the world to sailors if it

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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be single, but a good sign if it be double. The ancients believed it to be Castor and Pollux. By and by the faint light glided down the rope and rolled over close to the pilot; it stopped and then rolled itself round the sides of the ship, and afterward slipping through the hatches vanished away.””

“Who were Castor and Pollux, Uncle Arthur?”” inquired Harold.

“Castor and Pollux,” answered the captain, “were two demigods said to be the sons of Jupiter. It is said that after their death Jupiter changed the brothers into stars in the constellation known as the Gemini or the Twins. These imaginary beings were worshiped by the sailors as their protectors. Of course, Harold,” he said, “you understand that there is no truth in these stories of mythology.””

“Oh, yes,” said Harold, “I understand that, uncle.””

Opening another book the captain said:

“See here, Hiram; here is a much later book, published during the year 1598.””

“Do ye call that a later book, cap’in?”” inquired Hiram.

“Oh, yes,” was the reply, “more than sixteen hundred years later; for the story of Castor and Pollux was believed in by the ancients many years before the birth of Christ. But listen, Hiram, to what this man says in 1598,” and he then read the following:

“I do remember that in the great and boisterous storm of this foul weather, and in the night, there came on the toppe of the maine yard and maine mast

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

a certain little light much like the light of a little candle. The sailors call it the Suerpo Santo. This light shone on our ship for about three hours, flying from maste to maste and from the toppe to the bottom.'

"Jack," continued the captain, picking up another book; "listen to what Macaulay says about these lights:

"Safe comes the ship to haven,  
Through billows and through gales;  
If once the great twin brothers,  
Sit shining on its sails.

"The twin brothers," he added, "being of course Castor and Pollux."

# FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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## CHAPTER XX

### THE SARGASSO SEA OF THE NORTH PACIFIC

THEY were now drifting toward the west in the South Equatorial Current of the Pacific almost under the Equator in longitude 120° W., the Equatorial Counter Current having carried them a considerable distance toward the east. The fact that they had failed to drift into the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific had, as already suggested, greatly disappointed Harold, who had heard so much concerning the mysteries of this part of the ocean that he had hoped to see something of it.

One day while they were all together Harold remarked to Jack:

“I am awfully sorry we did not get into the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific.”

Harold’s remark appeared to greatly tickle Hiram, who began to chuckle.

“Perhaps, Mr. Harold,” he said, “you’d get to see more of that thar sea than would please ye.”

“Why do you say that, Hiram?” inquired Jack.

“Well, Mr. Jack, I’ll tell ye. I’ve often heerd some of my messmates say that when a vessel gits into the middle of that sea she stands a mighty good chance of staying ther fer good. I ain’t sartin of the truth of this, not having seed it myself, but them wot spun them

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yarns to me were keerful men who generally knew what they were talkin' about. Kain't ye tell us so'thing about the Sargasso Sea, cap'in?" he asked.

"I have not been in any of these seas, Hiram," was the reply, "but I understand from others and from my reading, that as a rule, the center of this region is free from wind, and that the floating objects such as seaweed, trunks of trees, and wreckage from vessels collect in this region. That toward its center the amount of this floating stuff is very great. I can understand, therefore, that if a vessel once gets well in toward the center she might remain there indefinitely. This region is visited by winds at times so that the vessels might eventually escape unless, of course, the weeds and other floating objects collected in such a tangled mass as to prevent the vessel from getting out even with a strong wind."

"A steamer would be the kind of vessel for such a region, would it not, uncle?" asked Harold.

"As far as the danger from calms is concerned," was the reply, "a steamer would be all right, and yet I think a steamer would have a still poorer show than a ship for forcing its way through a tangled mass of weeds; for you see, Harold," he continued, "the turning of the screw would wrap the seaweed firmly around the propeller shaft. In a short time, therefore, the tangled mass of weeds would prevent the screw from continuing to turn even under the full power of the engines."

"Still, uncle," persisted Harold, "I suppose you

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would not have cared if we had got a little way into the Sargasso Sea, since there are so many strange things to see there."

"I would not like it at all," said the captain. "If what I have read or heard about the Sargasso Sea be true, it would be far from safe for the brig to be drawn into it. Such a region is a sort of betwixt and between. It is neither firm enough to walk upon nor liquid enough to sail or steam through. If such a region is dangerous with a vessel provided with sails or steam power, how much more dangerous it would be to our brig, with no means for self-propulsion. I fear, therefore, had we been drawn toward the center of this sea we might be detained there until all our provisions were consumed so that we would perish from hunger. No, Harold," he continued, "I am very glad the brig has escaped finding its way into the Sargasso Sea."

"And so says Hiram Higgenbotham," exclaimed the boatswain. "The open water for me."

Whether it was the unusual quantity of free electricity in the atmosphere when so many corposants or St. Elmo's fires were seen on the brig, yet the day following the barometer began to fall rapidly, thus indicating the approach of stormy weather.

Hiram, who had first observed this fall of the barometer, reporting it to the captain, said:

"I reckon we may look out for a big wind."

"Yes, Hiram, I think there is no doubt but that a storm is coming, so let's close the hatches and the porthole lights before it reaches us."

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This was soon done and they all remained on deck watching the coming storm. The air was wonderfully clear all around them except in one direction. Toward the southeast, however, there appeared a thin mass of dim haze far off on the horizon. Hiram, pointing this out to the captain, remarked:

"Thar's the quarter from which the storm'll come. See, a fog is beginning to settle down. I allow there'll be a sight of wind behind that fog."

While Hiram was speaking the haze in the far southeast was seen to approach and in a little while began to settle down all around them. The mass of clouds could now be seen rapidly approaching from the southeast, and in a little while it reached the brig obscuring everything. A strong wind from the southeast set in and, increasing rapidly in strength, blew against the water so furiously as to lash its surface into masses of foam some of which, carried by the wind to the deck of the brig, soon covered it with white masses.

The strong wind reached the brig so quickly that before it could swing round so as to receive it on its stern it was struck amidships and was blown over so much that they feared it would capsize. Fortunately, however, the water-logged vessel was so deep in the water that capsizing was almost impossible. In a little while to our great relief the brig righted and, receiving the wind at her stern, was borne rapidly toward the northwest at a speed that the captain estimated as high as fifteen or twenty miles an hour. The righting of the brig, however, did not occur until several huge

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waves had swept the deck and nearly carried them overboard. As it was, the awning and the flag-pole with the built-up beams were swept overboard, partially wrecking the charthouse.

The fierce wind continued for many days to carry the brig generally to the northwest. The storm did not continue in all its strength during this time, but the heavens remained clouded so that it was impossible to get an observation to determine their exact position. Moreover, the wind varied both in direction and velocity. At last, however, the sky began to clear and the sun shone brightly on the waters.

But it was a very different sight that gradually unfolded itself in the coming sunlight. Instead of seeing the open sea with only an occasional patch of yellow weed, they were literally surrounded by great floating masses of the weed. These masses resembled floating islands and covered areas varying from one to many acres in extent. The weed was of a deep yellow color that contrasted strongly with the deep blue of the waters.

An observation taken by the captain showed the brig to be in latitude  $24^{\circ}$  N., longitude  $143^{\circ}$  W. from Greenwich.

"Well, Hiram," said the captain, "we have been blown so far to the northwest that we are now in the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific after all."

"I hope we're not in the center of that sea," exclaimed Jack, remembering what the captain said about the danger of getting in the center of the great

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

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mass. "Do you think we are near the center, captain?" he continued.

"I don't know," was the reply; "from the appearance of things I think we are only on the edge. Since, however, we are at the mercy of the currents there is a great danger of our being gradually carried by the great eddy nearer and nearer to the center. We may, therefore, be unable to escape it," and then fearing that what he had said would alarm the boys he added: "But let us hope for the best."

"That's right, cap'in," said Hiram, "and don't let's fergit that we air lucky to git here at all. I hev seed much stronger wessels than the brig that could not weather sech a storm as that wot brought us here. I am thinking, sir," he said turning to the captain, "that it might perhaps be well to look over the wessel and see if any of her seams has started."

To their satisfaction a careful examination showed the height of the water in the lower hold had not changed and, that as far as they could see, the storm had not injured the brig. She looked as if it would still be a long time before, although water-logged as she was, she would sink to the bottom and disappear.

On going to the cabin they found their position was probably about three or four hundred miles from the center of the region marked Sargasso Sea.

"In what direction is the brig heading, Hiram?" asked the captain.

"Due west," was the reply.

Houston is good but he screws up once in a while

## FIVE MONTHS ON A DERELICT

"Let's find her speed." So they cast the log and found that they were drifting at the rate of about a knot an hour.

"We are going much slower than before the storm," said Jack when he had heard from the captain the speed at which they were now moving. "That's pretty slow, but perhaps our speed will increase before long."

"I'm afraid not," was the reply.

As Jack could see, the captain, as well as Hiram, was greatly worried by their position. They were carefully watching the direction in which the brig was heading by observations every now and then. These directions were generally as follows: W.; W. N. W.; N. W.; N. N. W.; N.; N. N. E.; N. E.; E. N. E.; E.; E. S. E.; S., etc. In other words, the brig was moving in a circular path. Seeing that the results of these observations increased the anxiety of both the captain and Hiram, Jack asked, turning to the captain, whether there was much cause for worrying.

"Why, don't you see, Jack," was the reply, "that the brig has been caught in a vast whirl or eddy which is gradually drawing us toward the center of the Sargasso Sea; that is, taking us just where we feared it might."

"Still, captain," said Jack, "we have more food on the brig than we could eat in a year."

"I know, Jack, but we might spend more than a year in this district."

"Does our supply of fresh water worry you?" asked Jack.

I read Houston first <sup>272</sup> when I was a boy ca 1918  
again 1975

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"No, I am not worrying much about that; for, as you know, we have heavy rains here, so that with the arrangement of tubes Hiram has made there would be no difficulty in keeping our water-tanks filled."

"Do you think it necessary to put ourselves on short rations so as to make our food supply last longer?"

"There is hardly any necessity for that at present," was the reply; "but still I think it might be well to see what we can do toward increasing our food supply by fishing."

It was evident from the captain's remark that he regarded the outlook as threatening. Unwilling, however, to cause needless anxiety, he turned to Jack and Harold, and said in as cheerful a voice as he could assume:

"Here we are in the Sargasso Sea in the North Pacific, slowly drifting toward its center. We will take care to husband our food supplies, to keep our water-tanks filled, and keep on the outlook so as to lose no chances of escape. As for the rest, since it would be foolish to bewail our fate, I suggest that we take advantage of the opportunities that we now have for studying the wonders of this region. There is much to be learned here that has probably never before been carefully studied. We'll make notes of what we learn, and should we escape I will be able greatly to improve the doctor's manuscript as to what can be seen in the middle of the Sargasso Sea. Now I want you all to help in this work and make notes of what you see."

"We'll help you, captain," said both boys, "and jolly fun it'll be too."

"But fust of all," said Hiram, "I want you all to help me in fixing up the charthouse and patching the railing or some of us will be falling overboard."

The necessary repairs were completed in a few days.

Before beginning their regular observations the captain told the boys just what he wished them to observe. This was as follows: The kind and amount of seaweed; whether it is loosely spread out on the water or closely packed together; whether it covered the entire surface or was only collected in patches; the thickness of the weed, or whether it only lay on the surface or had collected in masses extending for considerable distances below the surface.

"But what I would especially desire," he added, "is that you should carefully observe the kind of animal life that finds its home in the seaweed."

"Hiram," said Jack as he listened to the work that was laid out for them, "since we can't examine the weed while it is in the water, won't you make us some contrivance by which we can take the weed out of the water and bring it on deck where we can study it?"

This request of Jack's greatly pleased Hiram, for he was not only greatly attached to Jack but was especially happy when he was inventing just such contrivances as Jack had asked for. So far as making a simple drag for bringing on deck whatever was lying on the surface the task was an easy one, but when Jack explained that what he desired was to be able to select

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the weed from the particular part of a mass and bring it on deck, Hiram found the problem filled with difficulties. He was an ingenious fellow, however, and continued working at it until he produced something that in most cases did the work Jack desired. Of course, however, in the case of every tangled and thick masses of weed its working was only partially satisfactory.

Frequent measurements of the speed of the brig by the log showed that the current was gradually decreasing in velocity, until at last their progress was so slow that they did not hesitate, when the weather was clear, to make short excursions around the brig in the life-boat. They were careful, however, in all such cases not only to keep a plentiful supply of food and drink on the boat, but never to leave the brig without at least two of their number on board.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE GRAVEYARD OF THE SEA

DURING the next five days frequent observations as to their direction showed that they were still slowly drifting in a huge circle, around an area the captain roughly estimated at about twenty-five miles in diameter. Measurements with the log showed that their speed was decreasing. Slowly but surely they were being drawn toward the center of the region all sailors dread. Without, however, foolishly worrying at what was beyond their power to prevent, they determined, while keeping ever on the alert, to take advantage of whatever chances to escape might present themselves, and to spend their time in observations of the peculiarities of the region through which they were slowly moving.

There was one conclusion they soon reached and that was that the Sargasso Sea of the North Pacific, at least as far as the portion they actually observed was concerned, differed markedly from the Sargasso Sea of the North Atlantic, as it existed according to the statements of those who claim to have actually visited it. In the first place, instead of the entire area being covered by a continuous mass of floating seaweed that completely shut out the sight of

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the water, only irregularly shaped areas were covered, in which the weed floated like islands. It is true that some of these islands were so extensive that they might properly have been termed, as suggested by Humboldt, "sea meadows," but still there were large areas of the ocean entirely free from the floating weeds.

Harold who, as is well known, was an inquisitive lad, one day asked the captain the meaning of the word Sargasso Sea.

"The Sargasso Sea," was the reply, "takes its name from a Portuguese word meaning "the sea of little grapes," in reference to the rounded air vesicles distributed through the weed. This name Sargasso Sea was applied to the sea through which Columbus was the first to sail during his voyage across the North Atlantic, and was afterward given to similar seas in the other oceans."

Another fact they soon discovered was that while unquestionably much of the weed was brought to the region by the ocean currents, a considerable portion grew while floating in the water; for much of the weed they saw was of recent growth.

While the color of the seaweed varied both with its age and character yet, taken as a whole, the weeds were of a magnificent golden olive color. Owing, however, to the fact that large portions of the surfaces of the weed were covered with a whitish layer of zoophytes, the general color was that of golden yellow which contrasted markedly with the deep blue color of the waters on which it was floating.

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One day, Jack, who had of late displayed considerable ability as an observer of natural phenomena, observed that the seaweed appeared of a much deeper yellow when surrounded by the blue water than it did when lying on the deck of the brig. Desiring to know whether he was mistaken in this belief, he said to the captain :

“ Captain, the weed seems to me to be of a much deeper yellow while floating in the ocean than when lying on deck. I have been wondering whether I have been deceiving myself in this belief. I think, however, that I have not. Can you help me in this matter ? ”

“ You are quite right, Jack,” was the reply. “ It is a well-known fact that complementary colors when placed alongside of each other have the depth of their color greatly increased by contrast. Now blue and yellow are complementary colors, so that if you observe a piece of yellow seaweed surrounded by deep blue water, the blue water makes the yellow weed look yellower, and the yellow weed makes the blue water look bluer than it otherwise would.” And then seeing that Jack was puzzled, he said : “ Come into the cabin and I will show you a simple experiment that will help you understand this. Come, Harold,” he said, addressing his nephew, “ I’m sure these experiments will interest you.”

On reaching the cabin the captain selected a number of disks of different colored paper the doctor had employed in certain experiments he had been making. He picked up a disk of deep blue paper and, placing it

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in the middle of a good-sized piece of black cloth, said to the boys:

“Now, boys, the experiment I want to show you will depend on your doing exactly what I ask you to do. I wish you to keep your eyes fixed on the center of the blue disk. Try not to let them wander from it.”

The captain’s request appeared greatly to tickle Harold who said to Jack:

“Jack, I’ll bet I can keep my eyes on the blue paper longer than you can.”

“All right, Harold,” was the reply; “but if you do you will have to look out for I intend to try to see what the captain wants us to be able to see.”

After the boys had looked steadily at the middle of the blue disk for fully two minutes the captain said:

“Now keep your eyes in the same direction. I am going to place a sheet of white paper, so as to cover both the blue disk and the black cloth. Now what you are looking at is only a sheet of white paper. Tell me what you see at its center.”

“I see a deep yellow disk,” said Jack in surprise.

“And so do I,” said Harold.

“And yet,” said the captain, “you are looking at a perfectly white sheet of paper. It is evident, therefore, that by steadily looking at a blue color the eye becomes filled as it were with a light of the complementary color to the blue, that is, with yellow. Now,” he added, “rest your eyes for a moment and I will arrange another experiment. Shut your eyes,” he added, “that will rest them more rapidly.”

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When the boys opened their eyes they found the piece of black cloth again spread out before them and in the middle of it a disk of colored paper. This time, however, it was a deep orange or yellow disk.

"Now," said the captain, "keep your eyes on the middle of this disk as you did before."

The boys did so, and at the end of two minutes, when a sheet of white paper was suddenly placed over the black cloth, the white surface appeared to have a deep blue disk at its center.

"That's certainly a very odd trick," said Harold.

"You mean a splendid experiment," indignantly remarked Jack.

"You can understand, Jack," said the captain, "that when you look at the orange-yellow weed floating on the deep blue water, each color tends to make the other color look of a deeper color; that is, the yellow weed makes the blue water look bluer, while the blue water gives to the yellow weed a more pronounced yellow color. You are, therefore, quite right in your belief that the weed is of a more pronounced color when floating on the surface of the blue water than when resting on the deck."

But the floating masses of seaweed were not by any means the only objects of interest to be seen. Every mass of seaweed formed the home of a great variety of different kinds of animal life. At first the boys thought that there was no animal life whatever among the weeds. Although the weeds were swarming with different kinds of life, such as various forms of small

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fishes, crustaceans, shellfish, zoophytes, and a great variety of worm-shaped animals, yet their colors were so exactly the same as that of the seaweed, near or on which they remained, that they did not see them until attention was directed to them.

This close similarity in colors between the animals and the weeds greatly interested the boys, especially Jack. He therefore inquired of the captain whether this resemblance was a mere accident or whether it was something to be expected in accordance with some general law.

"There can be no doubt, Jack," replied the captain, "that the animals have acquired the same color as that of the weeds on which they live as the result of a general law, called by Mr. Charles Darwin, 'The survival of the fittest.' The waters of the ocean and the atmosphere are both so clear in this part of the world, that if these animals had colors that would permit them to be readily distinguished from the color of the medium in which they live, very few of them could escape the keen-eyed fish in the waters below, or the equally far-seeing birds in the air above from rapidly devouring them. Darwin contends, and his contention would appear to be reasonable, that in this way the animals that survive the attacks of their enemies are those that were fittest to survive, or in other words, are those whose general color most closely resembled the color of the seaweed on or near which they live. Now, since as you probably know, there is a tendency of the young of all animals more or less closely to

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resemble their parents, there would in this way be produced the races of the seaweed-colored animals. Sir Wyville Thomson, the noted English naturalist, who spent considerable time in studying the animals in the Sargasso Sea of the North Atlantic says, as regards these colors:

“ ‘ I know of no more perfect example of protective resemblance than that which was shown by the gulf-weed fauna.’ ”

The boys spent many pleasant hours in watching the habits of the different animals that lived both on the seaweed and in the waters surrounding it. Apparently all these animals spent their lives in eating other animals and ended them by being eaten, for the boys soon discovered that no matter what animals they studied there always appeared to be some larger animal ready to devour them.

“ Jack,” said Harold one day as they sat in the stern of the life-boat watching the animals, “ I’m glad we are not like the animals on the seaweed who have to take such care not to be gobbled up.”

“ I don’t know,” said Jack laughing. “ I think if you and I were to fall in the water here we would soon find that we didn’t differ much from these animals; for look,” he said, pointing to an immense shark that was swimming lazily in the water about ten feet below the surface, “ it wouldn’t take long for that fellow to gobble us up.”

It is impossible for want of space to give an account of all the curious animals they observed in the

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seaweed. A few, however, were so odd that we will take time to give a short description of them. Among the animals that especially attracted their attention was a small-tailed crab that could be seen in great numbers resting on the weeds. These little animals appeared to be thoroughly aware of the fact that safety from their enemies consisted in their resting on something whose color was the same as the color of their bodies; for whenever the boys detached them from the seaweed, which they frequently did in order to observe their behavior, they appeared greatly alarmed and scurried back to the seaweed, nor did they appear to be satisfied until they had assumed such a position on the weed as would make it difficult to distinguish them.

It must not be supposed, however, that all the seaweed floated nearly at the surface of the water with each piece separate and distinct from the neighboring pieces. In many places it had been more or less closely matted together from various causes. Indeed, this collection of the matted material was so great that in places the weeds had sunk a few feet below the surface of the water.

One day, while examining a mass of seaweed, the boys saw an exceedingly curious-looking object. Although having once seen it, they found that it was much commoner than they had at first supposed. This was a mass of matted weed in the form of a rounded ball that appeared to have been purposely formed by some animal, for the separate weeds in the ball had

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been neatly stitched or sewn together by long jelly-like threads that possessed considerable tenacity. On showing one of these balls to the captain they were surprised when he told them that they were the nests of certain species of fishes that deposited their eggs inside.

One day, to their great delight, the boys found an odd-looking fish at work making a nest. It was so curious-looking that they had no difficulty in distinguishing it from the many other fish that swam in the waters in which the seaweed was floating. Its head was quite large in proportion to the size of its body, so that it presented a most grotesque appearance. It was exceedingly ugly, had a most prodigious appetite, and devoured its food as if almost starving.

Another odd animal found living in the seaweed was a curious variety of transparent shrimp closely resembling the insect known as the mantis, or praying insect, from the queer way in which it holds its front legs as if it were saying its prayers. This little shrimp was furnished with most wonderful eyes, since each of the little facets of which the eyes were composed emitted in the dark a brilliant green-colored light as if the separate lenses of the eye had been made of small emeralds.

But it was not only seaweed that formed the floating objects that had collected on the surface of the waters. As they drew nearer to the center of the Sargasso Sea they found a much greater proportion of the area covered by the floating weed, so that at times the brig

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would remain for hours slowly drifting through a mass of weed extending in all directions as far as the eye could see. But in addition to the seaweed they could occasionally see floating fragments of wreckage of all kinds.

One day Hiram was greatly excited by seeing through his glasses at the distance of about half a mile from the brig the masts of a ship and several spars floating on the water. It will be remembered that Hiram for a long while looked in vain through the stores of the brig for something that could serve as a mast for the brig. When, therefore, he saw in the water ahead of the brig two masts and several spars, apparently in good condition, he became greatly excited and said to the captain:

“We’ll be fixed all right, cap’in, ef we kin git them masts and spars.”

“All right, Hiram,” replied the captain, “we appear to be drifting directly toward them.”

In due time the brig reached the wreckage and Hiram succeeded, to his great delight, in getting the masts and spars and placing them on the deck of the brig.

“Now,” he remarked to the captain, “we must find time to rig up these masts for our brig, so that, should the wind blow, we kin at least try to git out of this here place.”

As the brig drifted nearer to the center of the Sargasso Sea different kinds of wreckage from vessels came more frequently in sight. On several occasions

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they saw a number of derelicts in the distance. Not any of these were in the direction in which they were drifting, and all were too far off to warrant their making any effort to reach them in the life-boat.

At last, however, they saw a derelict on the part of the horizon toward which they were drifting. The captain and Hiram at once began examining it with their glasses.

"A wery old vessel," said Hiram to the captain. "I allow she hez more portholes than a peaceable vessel would need."

"You are right," was the reply. "I can count three rows of six portholes each, on the side turned toward us. As she probably has the same number on the other side she must have been very heavily armed."

"It 'pears as though she warn't an everyday peaceable vessel."

"No, Hiram," was the reply, "she was possibly a pirate."

After several hours they drew sufficiently near the derelict to clearly discern her different parts. Jack, to whom the captain had handed his glasses, had been examining the vessel for some time after the captain and Hiram had temporarily ceased to look, and suddenly exclaimed:

"Captain, I think I can see the mouths of cannons through some of the portholes, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, there are several skeletons lying on the deck."

"O uncle, I do hope that we can go on board that

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derelict," said Harold. "Do you intend to try to board her?"

"Yes," was the reply, "if we come near enough, and it seems that there is anything worth examining. She lies directly in the path in which we are drifting, so that I do not think there will be any difficulty in boarding her."

As they drew nearer they could distinctly see, lying on the deck, the skeletons that Jack had referred to. Although the masts and some of the spars were still in place yet they appeared to have been damaged, as if the ship had been in action and cannon-balls had struck them. Indeed, one of the masts had been nearly cut in two by a cannon-ball, and the upper portions were still hanging on the deck with a few remnants of rotting sails clinging to the spars. They could now see too, that there were cannon in front of each of the portholes. The timbers of the deck had apparently partially rotted away, while the sides of the vessel were almost completely concealed by a covering of barnacles.

"Captain," exclaimed Jack, "that vessel looks if it had been floating for many, many years. It appears also to have been considerably damaged. I cannot understand how a vessel in such a condition could have remained so long a time afloat. I should think she would have sunk long ago."

"One would certainly imagine that, Jack," was the reply. "I know that most vessels in the condition of the one we see before us would have disappeared be-

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neath the waters almost immediately but, on the other hand, there are vessels such, for example, as our brig, that, both from the character of the cargo as well as from the presence of carefully constructed air-tight compartments, may remain floating for many years after being wrecked. Then again, in a region like the Sargasso Sea, where storms seldom occur, her chances for remaining afloat would of course be greatly increased."

They were now almost alongside the derelict, so that there was no difficulty whatever in boarding her. Moreover, the two vessels though drifting very slowly were drifting in the same direction, so that there would be very little chance of their soon becoming widely separated.

"I think we had better go aboard," said the captain.

"Hiram, I'll remain aboard the brig while you board her with the two boys, or, if you prefer, I will go with the boys and will afterward come back and give you a chance of examining her."

"I'll stay here, sir," was the reply, "so that you kin go aboard with the lads."

The captain and the boys were soon on the derelict. On reaching the deck they found the timbers so rotten that their feet sank into the wood for some little distance. There were nearly a dozen skeletons lying on different parts of the deck where they had apparently fallen when killed during the engagement. So long a time had elapsed, however, since death had overtaken them that their bones remained only partially

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covered with a few remnants of rotting clothes. Fairly large-sized guns of gun-metal were standing before the portholes on the three decks, and on two lower decks skeletons were also found, though not so many as on the upper deck. The guns were in good condition except that they were coated with a greenish substance produced by the rusting of the gun-metal.

"It looks," said the captain, "as if this vessel was a pirate and was destroyed while fighting with another vessel. But whether that vessel was destroyed and sunk, or whether she sailed off victorious, we may be able to determine when we make an examination. Let's see if we can get into the cabin. There, I think, we may get some additional information."

The stairs of the companionway leading to the cabin, while rotted like the deck, were nevertheless sufficiently strong to bear their weight. There were three berths in the cabin in one of which a skeleton was lying. They inferred from the remnants of rotting clothing that partially covered it that it was the skeleton of a man. A piece of muslin was still wrapped around its head. Enough of it, however, had fallen off to disclose a hole produced by a musket-ball on the forehead, while a deep indentation in one of the bones of the right arm apparently showed the marks of a saber cut.

"This," said the captain, "was probably the commander of the vessel who, after being wounded, was brought down into the cabin by his companions to die."

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"See here, captain," said Jack, who had pulled open a locker in one corner of the cabin, the door of which was so rotten that it came off in his hands and fell to the floor; "look at this flag," and with that he held up a black flag with a skull and cross-bones worked on its surface in white.

"It is as I imagined," said the captain. "This was a pirate ship and has probably been destroyed by the vessel it was attacking. I think we had better look carefully over the vessel to see whether anything of value is to be found. Wait a moment," he added, going on deck and hailing Hiram and telling him briefly what they had discovered.

"See ef she hez any money or other waleables," cried Hiram.

"All right," replied the captain. "If there are valuables we will try to find them."

As they went through the different parts of the vessel the skeletons were a most gruesome sight. They counted no less than twenty of them. While there was no flesh remaining on the bones, yet the damp air to which they had been exposed had produced a species of horrible fungus growth on some of them. Near each skeleton was found the musket, pistol, or the cutlass with which the man had been armed.

"I think, uncle," exclaimed Harold, "that we ought to find treasures on the vessel. I remember reading about Captain Kidd, who seems to have stolen such a pile of money and other things from the ves-

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sels he destroyed that he was obliged to bury them on lonely islands in different parts of the world."

"If this vessel has been a pirate for many years I do not doubt that many valuable goods have been taken. It all depends, however, on whether the vessel with which these people were fighting was sunk during the action or was successful. If the latter, the conquerors would of course have taken everything of value with them."

"Suppose we should find a big treasure," continued Harold, "would it belong to us or would we have to give it up?"

"We had better find the treasure first, Harold," said his uncle smiling.

"But if we should find it?" persisted the boy.

"Well, if we should find it and could discover the parties from whom it had been stolen we would, of course, in honesty be obliged to return it to them, but the chances of doing this would of course be very few; for even supposing, as is highly improbable, that the pirate had left such people living, so long a time has apparently elapsed since this vessel was destroyed that these people are probably dead long ago, and there is no way by which their heirs could be discovered. Of course, as to the pirates themselves, they would have no right to leave these treasures to their heirs. I think, therefore, if we find anything no one will dispute our right to keep it as our property."

Although a careful examination of the derelict showed that at one time the vessel had contained a

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valuable store of different kinds of rich merchandise, yet during the many years to which it had been exposed to the damp air, this had either rusted or rotted, so that it was practically worthless. It was evident too, that if any gold or other money or jewels had been collected, they had been removed by some parties who had been there before them, probably the crew of the destroying vessel; for with the exception of a few gold pieces and some comparatively common jewelry, they were unable to find anything of value. They therefore returned to the deck of the derelict and informed Hiram as to the result of the search.

"Do you want to come on deck, Hiram? If so, I will leave the boys here and bring you the boat."

"Wall, sir," said Hiram, "sence I'm here so near the vessel I think I'll go aboard her, and the boys and I will see if we kain't find something that's worth money."

"Boys," said the captain, "wait here until Hiram joins you. You're not afraid to stay here with the skeletons, are you?"

Now the truth is that Harold was not at all pleased with the idea of remaining on the derelict, but seeing a smile come into the captain's face and fearing that he would laugh at him, he replied:

"Yes, uncle, Jack and I will remain here."

When Hiram boarded the derelict they again made search for gold or other valuables. The search, however, was unsuccessful for nothing of any value was found.

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As they were about leaving the derelict Hiram, who had been greatly admiring the bronze cannon succeeded in dismounting one of them from the gun-carriage and lowered it into the life-boat.

"Mebbe we kin use it some time," he remarked.

The brig remained for two additional weeks near the center of the Sargasso Sea. These weeks proved exceedingly uncomfortable and unpleasant, for the number of derelicts increased. They thought it worth their while to examine only four of these. In two instances several skeletons were found. In two other instances, however, where the vessels appeared as if they had not been in the water for a long time, they found a number of dead bodies in a state of awful decomposition. The odor given out by these bodies in the close, confined air of the cabins in which they were found was of so horrible a nature that they hurriedly left the vessels without making any further examination.

"What kind of a place are we getting into, anyhow?" exclaimed Jack.

"The graveyard of the sea," replied the captain.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### TOWED BY A CACHALOT

THEIR condition was not only growing unpleasant but was becoming very dangerous. The drifting of the brig was very slow; indeed, at times it appeared as if it had no onward motion whatever. The extent of the floating masses of seaweed had so greatly increased as almost completely to cover the surface of the water. Moreover, the flotsam, or portions of goods swept overboard from wrecked vessels that on account of their buoyancy continued to float, increased in amount. To these were added various portions of wrecked vessels themselves, such as rails, masts, spars, planks, and in some cases portions of the cabin furniture. This floating débris so impeded the slow onward motion the feeble currents might have given them, that their daily progress became almost inappreciable.

As soon as Hiram had obtained the masts and spars from the floating wreckage alluded to in the preceding chapter, he persuaded the others to aid him in erecting two masts on the brig, together with such spars as were necessary for the support of the sails.

Owing to the presence of water in the lower hold it was impossible to rest the ends of the masts against the keel, so they were obliged to employ a far less

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satisfactory method. When completed, it was an odd-looking arrangement of masts, spars, and rigging generally, but it was the best they could do. Indeed, it very well matched their sails; for, being unable to find a sufficient quantity of sailcloth in the stores for sails, they were obliged to use the same kind of highly colored blankets employed for their overcoats. These carefully stitched together, and properly placed on the spars produced an appearance which was to say the least very astonishing.

"I allow," said Hiram, "that though our sails may be wery purty, they would likely make some of my messmates laugh ef they could see 'em. Howsumever, ef ther wuz eny wind, I am purty sartin they'd draw. But blame it all," he continued, "there don't seem to be no chance uv a wind ever comin' into this blooming region."

With the aid of the captain, Hiram also succeeded in rigging up a jury-rudder on the stern of the brig. As he remarked:

"I think it'll work all right, but we can't tell for sartin ontil a wind comes."

Hiram was much provoked after all the work they had in setting up the masts and rigging, arranging the sails, and building the jury-rudder and putting it in place, that there was no wind with which to test his work. During the entire time they were in the region, there had not been sufficient wind to make even a catspaw appear on those limited portions of the ocean where the water could be seen.

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Hiram's companionship with the captain and the boys had done much toward weakening his superstitious fancies. There is, however, one superstition so deeply rooted in the mind of the average sailor that probably nothing can uproot it; this is that the wind can be induced to blow by a species of ridiculous magic. The boys were greatly amused one day watching Hiram's proceedings in this direction. They were careful, however, not to let him know they were watching him.

Hiram was evidently ashamed of what he was doing; for, he looked around every now and then to see if any one was about. This is what the boys saw: He began by going to one of the masts which they had recently erected and commenced to scratch it with the nail of his hand. As this did not produce the desired effect he opened one of the blades of his knife and drove it some little distance into the wood of the mast.

"What in the world is he doing?" whispered Harold to Jack.

"Not so loud, Harold," said Jack, "he'll hear us. I've heard that sailors frequently act in this way under the belief they can make the wind blow. Let's keep on watching. A plan they often adopt for raising a wind is to whistle for it. I think after a while Hiram will begin to whistle."

Hiram was evidently much chagrined at the failure of what he had done to the mast of the ship to bring him a wind.

"Bad luck," they could hear him growling in a

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low tone. "I hev did all these things jes as I've seed my mates do, but there comes nary a wind. Guess I'll try whistling." So he began a low whistle as though he feared attracting the attention of his companions, who he was sure would laugh at him. Being no more successful with the faint whistling he gradually increased it until he was whistling as loud as he possibly could. At the same time they heard him speaking. What he said was as follows:

"Come now, rouse yerself up, old boy, and give us a wind to blow us out of this here place."

We cannot say what further proceedings Hiram would have gone through with; for, as is well known, sailors are so full of superstitious ideas concerning the wind that he would probably have continued, but when he began talking in a pleading tone to the invisible power he believed could send the wind, the boys could stand it no longer. Laughing aloud, they came up to him and said:

"What are you doing, Hiram, trying to raise a wind?"

"Wall," said Hiram, in a shamefaced manner, "I'll tell ye the truth, my lads, I wuz, but the blamed things won't work."

"Of course they won't, Hiram," said Jack, "it's well understood that winds are caused by differences of heat and cold, so that whistling or scratching a vessel's masts are not going to bring them."

"They be caused by differences of heat and cold, be they, Mr. Jack?" he replied. "I'm sure there's

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a-plenty of heat. I s'pose the wind don't come 'cause there's no cold."

"Very likely," said Jack laughing.

Afterward when the boys told the captain about Hiram's strange actions, he said:

"There is a very common belief among sailors that winds can be made to blow by means of certain charms. Whistling is one of the commonest. You may probably remember what Longfellow wrote about this belief:

"Only a little while ago,  
I was whistling to Saint Anthony,  
For a capful of wind to fill our sail;  
And instead of a breeze he sent a gale."

The hot sultry weather and the continued calms, together with the gloomy sights that surrounded them, were gradually affecting their health. It was next to impossible to sleep in the cabin on account of the stifling hot air, so they spent most of the night on deck. Here, however, they either actually smelled, in an occasional derelict they passed, the horrible air due to the gradual rotting of corpses, or, even when such an odor had no actual existence, they so conjured it up in their imaginations that they actually suffered almost as much as if it was really there. Then too, while their food supplies were still sufficient to prevent any immediate cause for worry, yet the rains had for some reason or other been very scant, and the water supply was daily growing dangerously low.

These causes combined greatly to worry the captain.

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The state of their health, especially that of Harold gave him much anxiety. He feared, and not without reason, that the stagnant air remaining as it did almost constantly in contact with the decaying matter floating on the surface of the water, would breed some contagious disease that would carry them all off. He, therefore, gave much anxious thought and endeavored to make some plan by which they might force their way to the outside of the Sargasso Sea, where they could meet a current that would carry them away from the awful region.

At one time the captain thought that possibly by attaching the painter of the life-boat to the bow of the vessel they might be able to tow the brig toward the open water. After a trial, however, lasting nearly ten consecutive hours in which the men and boys alternately rowed, finding, that as far as they could see, they had made almost no progress whatever, the captain reluctantly abandoned this plan as worthless.

Although they had not given up the study of the seaweed and its animal life, yet for the past week or so the hot weather with its humid, stifling, fetid air, and their inability to rest at night, had so lowered their general health that they paid less and less attention to these observations and at last discontinued them entirely.

One day, Jack, who had been observing the surrounding sea with the glasses, suddenly turned to the captain, and said:

“Captain, there’s something I cannot understand.

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There appears to be a large open space over there," pointing to a certain part of the ocean, "that is wonderfully clear from weed or other floating matter."

"Well, Jack," said the captain listlessly, "I don't see anything remarkable in that."

"But, captain," persisted Jack, "the queer thing about it is that the water is not calm, but seems to be in motion."

"What's that ye say?" cried Hiram, turning his glasses toward the place indicated by Jack. "Ye say the water be a-moving. Perhaps it's a wind a-coming," and then turning to the boys, he cried triumphantly, "see here, now, that magic I did t'other day warn't so bad arter all. I allow it's worken now."

"Why, Hiram," exclaimed Harold, "that was two days ago. The magic couldn't have lasted till now, could it?"

"I won't say for sartin," said Hiram, obstinately, "it might be if the magic were strong enough."

He had stopped looking through the glasses in order to talk with the boys. The captain, however, in an excited tone, cried:

"That's no wind, Hiram. That motion is caused by something below the surface."

Hiram again pointing his glasses to the spot cried:

"I allow you're right, captain. I have seed that before. Look," he cried, still more excitedly, as a rounded black object emerged a short distance above the water, and then, bringing its huge head to the surface, there could be seen a column of light misty

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spray rising in the air accompanied by a blowing sound; "thar she blows," continued Hiram. "It's a whale. A-many of 'em I've seed, fer I was two years sarvin' as boatswain on a whaler."

"What kind of a whale do you suppose it is, Hiram?" asked the captain.

"I can't tell for sartin, sir," was the reply, "but I guess it's a sperm whale."

"Hiram, let me take a look through your glasses, please," said Harold.

"Sartin, Mr. Harold, and it's a sight worth seein'," he exclaimed as he handed him the glasses.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Harold, greatly astonished at what he saw. "Look at that, Jack. The whale's striking the water with his big tail and making a great ado about it."

"That's what the whaling men call loblolling," said Hiram.

At each successive blow a sound was produced that they could distinctly hear.

"Look at him now," cried Jack; "he has jumped out of the water. See him come down with a bang."

It was odd indeed to see the immense creature jump several times out of the water striking it with a bang that caused the spray to rise high in the air—something like what boys call a belly-smasher when a bad dive is taken while swimming.

"The animal appears playful," said the captain, "though I have heard that this thing is practised by several species of whales for the purpose of endeavor-

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ing to rid their bodies of a parasitic or sucking fish that fixes itself firmly on its sides.

“Hiram,” continued the captain, “if that fellow is a sperm whale, or a cachalot, and we could manage to get a harpoon stuck in its body, might we not have a chance of the animal drawing us out of this part of the ocean?”

“I allow we might,” was the reply.

“Of course,” continued the captain, “I know there would be the difficulty of getting a harpoon in the animal and even supposing we could do this and he could pull us through the water there would be the danger of smashing into some of the derelicts. I think we could rely on the jury-rudder preventing the brig striking such a thing as a derelict or other large piece of wreckage.”

“I ain’t got no doubts about it,” said Hiram. “I feel sartin that air jury-rudder will work. Now I allow that sense we ain’t got no whale-boat we’d hev trouble in sticking the harpoon into the critter’s body. Sometimes, however, I hev known these animals to float for an hour er longer on the water in the hot sunshine. Ef we could git near enough we might land a harpoon in him.”

“Didn’t you tell me, Hiram,” inquired the captain, “several weeks ago that you had discovered a large whale-harpoon in good condition attached to a long whale-line? If so, get it out and if we have a chance we’ll try our luck in getting the cachalot to tow us out of this miserable region.”

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Hiram heartily seconded this proposition and the harpoon and whale-line were brought out on the deck and left so that they might be used should the opportunity present itself.

Whether the whale was aware of their presence by scent or otherwise it never came near the brig. During the next two days the captain had an opportunity of answering many questions put to him by the boys concerning the habits of this immense animal.

“The whale,” said the captain, “is a mammalian, and like all mammals, brings forth its young alive and nurses them during infancy by suckling, the mother being provided with udders or teats, from which the young is able to suck large quantities of an exceedingly rich milk. The mother can sometimes be seen floating on the water suckling its young. It lies on its back for this purpose with its head partly under water, the position being changed from time to time in order to permit the mother and its young alternately to breathe.”

“Uncle Arthur,” inquired Harold, “is it from this whale that whalebone is obtained?”

“No, Harold, whalebone is obtained from a species of whale called the baleen whale. The baleen whale, instead of being provided with teeth has a number of horny plates, some three or four hundred, which hang downward into the mouth from the palate. These plates are triangular in cross-section, and are provided at their ends and edges with hairy shreds. As the whale swims with its mouth open, through shoals

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of very minute crustaceans and other tiny animals on which it lives, it uses this device as a species of net by which the animals are strained out, and, as soon as it has secured a good mouthful of food, it closes its jaws, allowing the water to drain out and swallows what it has caught.

"Now," he continued, "the cachalot or sperm whale which we have been examining is of an entirely different species, being what is called a toothed whale, because it is provided with numbers of strong conical teeth on one of its jaws. When this animal is feeding it drops its lower jaw to nearly right angles to the upper jaw, thus displaying its bright white teeth. This is said to attract its prey and as soon as the animals come in contact with the jaw it closes it with a snap thus crushing its food which it then swallows."

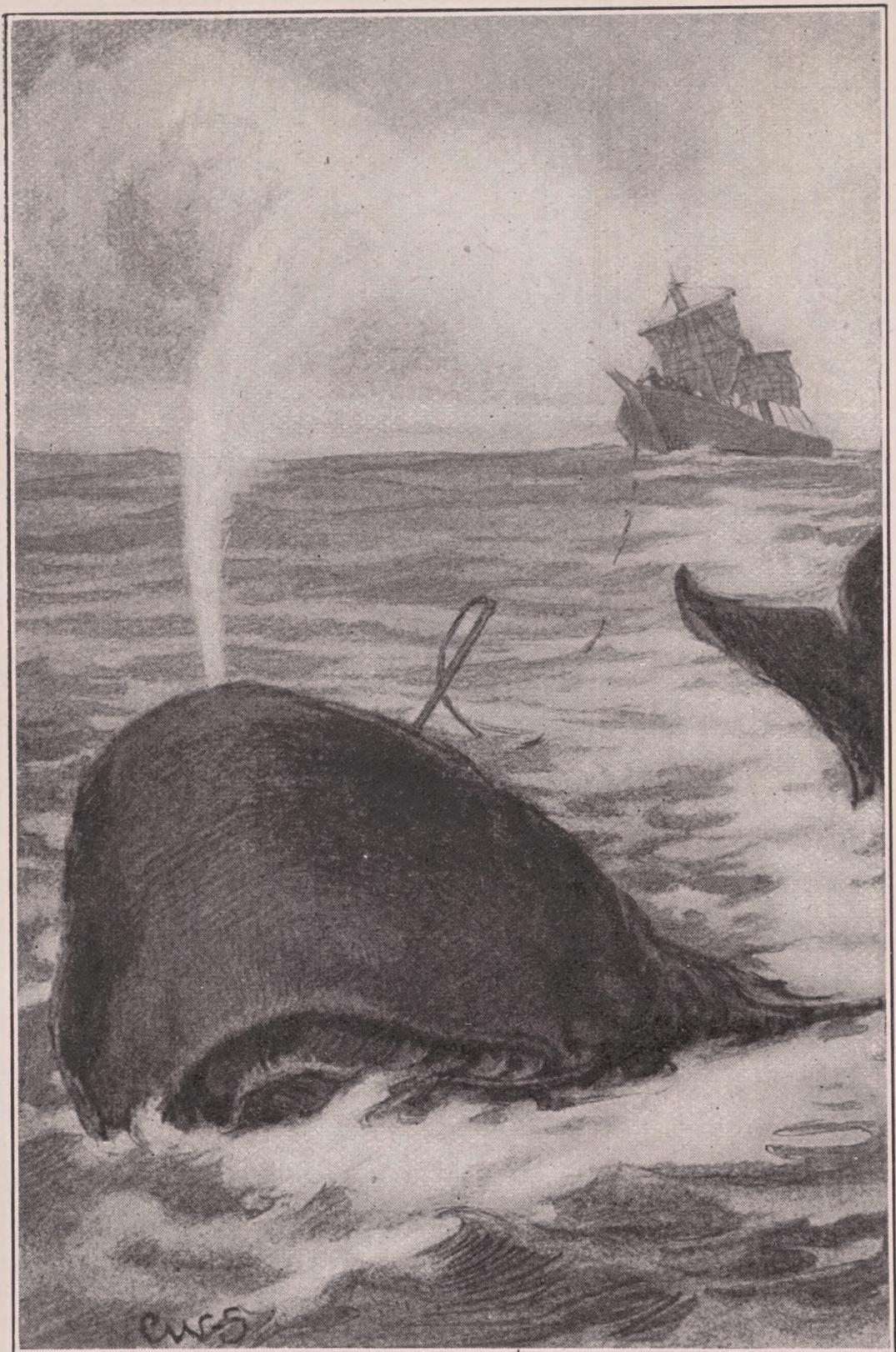
"Then, sir," inquired Jack, "I suppose the food of the sperm whale consists of much larger animals than that of the whalebone whale?"

"Yes," was the reply, "the sperm whale I believe lives on such animals as squids and cuttlefish."

"What makes the spouting column we saw?" inquired Harold. "Does the animal draw the water in at its mouth and then squirt it up into the air?"

"No, Harold, that is a common but a mistaken idea. It is not a column of water that is spouted upward, but a column of mist or cloud. The animal can remain a long time under water. Before sinking it fills its lungs with air, and, when it comes to the surface, breathes out this air through its nostrils or





*“‘We are heading fer the open water,’  
cried Hiram”*

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blow-hole. As the air has been for some time in the animal's body it is filled with water vapor, which being condensed, when cooled by contact with the air, forms a column of fog or cloud that at a distance is sometimes mistaken for a column of water. The blowing sound is due to the air escaping forcibly through the nostrils."

Since the whale appeared to avoid coming near the vessel they determined to hide themselves so as to prevent being seen by the animal. Whether it was due to this fact, or was merely a matter of luck, we will not say, but one afternoon they had the good fortune to drift noiselessly so near a huge whale lying asleep, or at least motionless, on the surface of the water, that Hiram was able to hurl the harpoon so that it entered deep in the side of the animal.

With a roar of pain and rage, the wounded animal suddenly dropped out of sight as if it had been a lump of lead or iron. Hiram had taken the precaution of coiling the long whale-line so that it would not kink or tangle and had attached the other end firmly to a strong support near the bow of the vessel. As the line pulled taut a sudden jerk was given to the brig so severe that they feared would either break the whale-line or tear the bolt out of the side of the brig to which it had been attached.

The brig at once began rapidly to move through the water toward the southwest.

"We are heading fer the open water," cried Hiram.  
"Ef this keeps up we air a-goin' to git out."

"Yes," said the captain, "and we are moving very rapidly. That is an immense animal, Hiram," he added, "I should say nearly eighty feet in length."

"He's a big whale, sir," said Hiram. "I'm only afeered that he'll git mad, turn, and run agin the wessel. I've heerd of good wessels being sunk in that way."

Fortunately the cachalot that had them in tow was apparently not of the fighting type. As might have been known from its great size it was a male; for, the female of this animal is always much smaller than the male. He simply continued swimming with great rapidity toward the south, coming, of course, every now and then to the surface to breathe. It was wonderful the length of time the animal was able to continue under the water.

At first it did not appear that the animal was severely wounded for the vapor spout from his spout-hole was quite free from blood. Toward the close of his long run, which was over thirty-six hours, possibly by reason of bursting a blood-vessel, the spout became deeply tinged with blood, and shortly after these symptoms appeared, the animal showed by his actions that he was in his death-throes; for, he began lashing the surface of the water with his huge tail, beating it with a deafening noise into a great mass of foam. Finally, in his last agonies, he began swinging around with almost inconceivable velocity in a short circular path.

Immediately before his death, however, a change in

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the tactics of the dying animal greatly alarmed them; for, stopping a moment in his frenzied, circular motion, he raised his huge head out of the water and looking angrily at the brig started as if he intended to butt it with his head. Fortunately, however, the animal had expended his remaining energy; for, at this moment, a torrent of blood gushed out from his spout-hole, and he turned over on his side and died.

They were surprised that the animal had been able to continue his wild rush toward the south for so long a time. It is probable, however, as the captain suggested, that this long run was possible, owing to the fact that the harpoon had not reached any vital spot. Toward the end of the run, however, several hours before the death-throes began, possibly urged by increasing fear at being unable to rid himself of his strange load his speed was notably increased. This, most probably, had resulted in the bursting of a blood-vessel.

Toward the end, the spouting of the animal was attended by a hoarse roaring sound not unlike the bellowing of a bull. This, however, was due to the labored passage of the air as it was violently expelled through the partially stopped air passages of the animal in its dying throes.

As the dead body of the huge animal lay quietly floating on the surface of the water, they were greatly pleased to note that the brig was no longer in the Sargasso Sea, but in clear water, and was evidently in a well-marked ocean-current, for the brig was drift-

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ing toward the west, only now, instead of being towed by the whale, it was towing the whale toward the west at the rate of several miles an hour.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried the captain, "we are safely out of the Sargasso Sea, and are now floating in open water. The animal has saved us, but it has been at the cost of its own life."

Taking advantage of a momentary slacking of the brig's motion, they succeeded, after considerable difficulty, in transferring the whale-line to the stern of the brig, and this being done they were able to gradually haul in on the line until the floating carcass was brought in near enough for inspection.

They could now see what almost always occurs under such circumstances. The waters seemed to be literally swarming with sharks that had been attracted by the presence of so much food. Many of them were of great size and had already begun to tear and rend the body, eagerly devouring it. Hiram wished to take the life-boat, so as to obtain some of the blubber for the furnishing of oil for their lamps, or of the valuable wax-like substance, spermaceti, from a portion of the head known as the case. The captain, however, very wisely persuaded him of the inadvisability of doing this, urging that this work requires the proper tools and considerable skill, and that, moreover, from the number of sharks surrounding the carcass, any unfortunate slip while engaged in this work would be exceedingly dangerous.

"If we actually needed the oil and the spermaceti,"

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said the captain, "we might be justified in taking the risk, but not otherwise."

"Uncle," exclaimed Harold, "I don't see that its teeth can be of much use to this whale. As far as I can see he has no teeth in the upper jaw to bite against. Do you know whether there are any teeth in the upper jaw? I can't understand it."

"Nor can others much older than yourself, Harold," said the captain, laughing. "It is, however, the general belief that the cachalot was originally provided with teeth on both the upper and the lower jaws, but gradually lost these teeth for want of use. I remember reading of whales in which some slight evidences of teeth, or at least places suitable for the reception of teeth, are still found in the upper jaws. Since this jaw is hard the animal has no use for its teeth especially when the soft character of its food is considered; for, this is very often the giant squid or cuttlefish. Besides, I understand the animal is capable of giving a slight sawlike motion to the jaw which makes it a formidable weapon when used against the squid or cuttlefish."

After having satisfied themselves examining the whale, the line was cut as near to the animal as they conveniently could when the animal was abandoned to the sharks, as well as to the numerous sea-fowl that were fighting with the sharks for their share of the prey. It seemed almost cruel to thus leave the body of the animal that had drawn them out of the Sargasso Sea at the cost of its life.

That afternoon while in the cabin the captain gave them some interesting information concerning the whale.

"A great number of animals are included under the general name of whales," he said. "All these, however, as far as their importance is concerned, can be divided into the baleen whales, or, as they might be called in common language, whalebone whales, and into the toothed whale of which the sperm whale is an example.

"It is from the baleen whale that whalebone is obtained. Sometimes a good-sized whale will yield almost two tons of whalebone.

"The toothed whale," continued the captain, "includes a great variety of animals, including the cachalot, or sperm whale, the bottle-nose, the Arctic narwhal, the beluga, the grampus, or killer, and the common dolphin. The sperm whale which is one of the most important of the class, unlike the baleen whale, is destitute of the whalebone sieve and is provided, on both sides of its lower jaw, with hard teeth as you have seen. The cachalot is capable of swallowing huge mouthfuls as it does when it attacks its principal food supply, the squid or cuttlefish. Such an animal, despite the gross ignorance of the so-called higher critics of the Bible, who call in question the credibility of the whale mentioned in connection with the prophet Jonah, could not only readily swallow a man but an object much larger than a man."

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FLOATING BOTTLE

ACCORDING to observations made by the captain with the sextant and the chronometer, they were now in latitude 18° N., longitude 150° W., or were again well within the limits of the Northeast Trades. The steady wind from the northeast was very agreeable after the stagnant air of the Sargasso Sea, but Hiram was especially pleased since it gave him the long and anxiously waited for opportunity of testing the brig's sails and the jury-rudder. There was one fact, however, that soon became evident, both to Hiram and the captain, and that was that even supposing the gaudy colored sails would stand strong winds, it would by no means be safe to bring too strong pressure on the masts in view of the very weak condition of the brig's timbers. The action of the rudder was fairly satisfactory; for, it was able to determine the course of the brig provided they did not attempt to sail too close to the wind.

The fact that they were now under sail necessitated much harder work and required two to be on watch on the deck, one to attend to the steering and the other to make such occasional changes in the sails as might be necessary. The labors of this watch, however, were not very severe since the direction of the vessel was seldom changed, while the simple character of the sails

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and rigging did not call for any severe work. Indeed, both of the boys were quite competent to attend to this work and were very glad to do so.

The watches were arranged so that each watch included the captain and one of the boys, or Hiram and the other boy. By means of the dog-watches, as before, however, they arranged matters so that a fair division of the two watches were arranged as regards night work. These duties, however, were not so severe as to prevent them from obtaining an abundance of sleep. In this way they were able to more than make up for the many almost sleepless nights they had experienced while in the heart of the Sargasso Sea.

As the brig approached the Equator they again entered the Equatorial Counter Current of the Pacific. Again passing through the regions of the doldrums, or the Zone of Equatorial Calms, they at last entered the zone of the Southeast Trades. Here too, they entered the South Equatorial Current, a broad constant ocean current that sweeps across the ocean from east to west.

They spent much of their time, except, of course, that required for sleeping, on deck. One day, while Jack and the captain were sitting under an awning talking and reading, while Hiram and Harold were on watch, Jack, who had been looking through the glasses at something floating in their wake, became greatly excited and handing the glasses to the captain exclaimed :

“ I think that’s a floating bottle over there, captain,” pointing to the object at which he had been looking.

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"Yes," said the captain, apparently even more excited than Jack was. "Call Hiram and Harold. We will lower the life-boat and pick it up. There is no telling what news it may bring us."

"I do not think it is one of our bottles, captain," remarked Jack. "It seems to me of a different size and shape from those we threw overboard. What do you think?"

"It is not one of our bottles," replied the captain, who had been examining the bottle through the glasses while Jack had been talking to him. "But call Hiram and Harold; we will lower the life-boat, pick it up, and then we will soon find out all about it."

As soon as Hiram had secured the rudder, by lashing it in the direction in which they were moving, the captain requested Jack to accompany Hiram in the life-boat, which was soon lowered and in a few minutes Jack had picked up the floating bottle, brought it on deck, and handed it to the captain. It was not only a sealed bottle, but being made of thin light-colored glass, they could see a roll of paper inside it. They crowded around the captain, anxiously watching him as he removed the cork and began to unroll the small sheet of paper it contained.

The letter happened to be rolled so that the captain saw the upper portion before the signature was uncovered. There was evidently something in the writing that greatly surprised him, for he exclaimed:

"I know that handwriting. It is that of Captain Parker, of the Ketrel. See," he continued, completely

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unwrapping the sheet, "here is his signature, William M. Parker."

"How wonderful," exclaimed Jack. "To think that in this immense body of water after the exceedingly long and irregular path our brig has taken, we should happen to be on this part of the ocean the same time the bottle is crossing our path."

"Yes," said the captain, who had naturally been glancing at the letter, "it is indeed wonderful, Jack, especially since it is almost certain that the bottle has taken an entirely different route from that of the brig. But," he said, "we can talk about that afterward. This letter brings good news concerning the fate of our late companions. All of them have been saved. Listen while I read." After giving the date, the latitude and longitude, the captain read the following:

The ship Ketrel, of London, from Liverpool to Yokohama, has been wrecked here by a typhoon. Our masts and rigging have been broken off and washed overboard, and before they could be cleared away the sides of the vessel have been injured. The vessel leaked badly and began to sink, but not before all on board were safely transferred to our four boats. As the last boat was safely off the ship sank and disappeared. During the continuance of the storm one of our boats under the command of the first mate, Lieut. Arthur Harding, was separated from the others, and not having been seen we fear she has been lost. In this boat besides Lieutenant Harding were Hiram Higgenbotham, boatswain; two English lads, Harold Arthur Harding and John Parker Jackson, and two of the crew. All the other boats kept together and steered for the coast of China. During another storm which continued for five days our boats have been greatly injured and are now sinking. God have mercy upon us.

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Then came the following writing evidently having been added some time afterward:

At nearly the last moment, as we are almost sinking, when about sealing this letter in the bottle, we have all been safely transferred to a steamer bound for Tokio. I will throw the bottle overboard, anyhow, as it is now ready. Any one finding this bottle will please forward letter to Mr. John Harding, care of the British consulate, Yokohama, Japan.

WILLIAM M. PARKER, captain of the Ketrel.

When the captain finished reading there was an outburst of joy from all.

“Let us thank God,” said the captain, “for this great deliverance of our friends,” and reverently kneeling, the captain made a brief but earnest prayer.

It is not difficult to understand the effect produced on the four people on the brig by this very unexpected and joyous news. All had friends or relatives among those saved. Remembering the narrow escape they had during those five awful days of storm while in the open boat, each had secretly feared though careful to conceal his fears, that all the other boats had been sunk and their occupants drowned. Now, however, they knew beyond doubt, that their friends had long ago reached Japan, and their friends in Yokohama.

Hiram was the first to break the silence that followed the captain’s prayer.

“I’ve heerd great news many a time,” he said, “but this beats ‘em all hollow; fer, I know now for sartin that all my messmates ain’t yet been gathered into Davy Jones’ locker, as I feared they hed been.”

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“It is indeed magnificent news,” said the captain. “It must be a matter of great satisfaction to Captain Parker that, with the exception of our boat which he regards as hopelessly lost, he has been able to insure the safety of all the passengers in the three boats. It must have been a happy moment for him when he saw them all safely transferred to the steamer.”

“And how splendid it is,” said Jack, “that the steamer that rescued them was bound for Tokio.” And then remembering that Tokio was near Yokohama so that Harold’s father and mother must by this time have heard of the supposed death of the two boys and Lieutenant Harding, he did not finish speaking.

Harold, who understood why Jack had stopped talking, remarked :

“I know why you stop, Jack. Father and mother have long ago been mourning us as dead. Captain,” he inquired eagerly, “don’t you think it possible that some of the sealed bottles we threw overboard containing an account of our escape and our presence on the brig may have been picked up so that the news may in this manner have reached Yokohama?”

“It is quite possible, Harold,” was the reply, “and if so, every vessel that sails in these waters will be on the outlook for our derelict brig.”

“I hope so, uncle, indeed,” said Harold sorrowfully. “It is not that we are not having a splendid time on the brig; indeed, if it were not for father and mother I would be willing and happy to stay here for a long time.”

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Seeing how deeply the lad was affected by the knowledge that as far as the information contained from the survivors of the wrecked Ketrel was concerned that his parents were mourning him as dead, and wishing to make him more hopeful the captain said:

“ You must not forget, Harold, now that we have sails and a rudder, we are no longer obliged to go only in the direction in which the currents are moving. We are steering toward a part of the ocean where our chances of meeting passing vessels are greatly increased. Moreover, should the opportunity present itself, we can sail toward the nearest port, should we meet no vessel in the meanwhile.”

“ If the sail and rudder hold,” remarked Hiram, “ I’ll promise to navigate the brig to any part of this great ocean.”

“ In what part of the ocean are we, captain?” inquired Jack.

“ Come into the cabin and I will show you on the chart.”

When they reached the cabin, pointing to the chart, the captain said:

“ We are at present here, in latitude  $18^{\circ}$  S., longitude  $155^{\circ}$  W., or, as you can see, nearly midway between the continent of South America on the east and Australia on the west. The nearest land is some of the many islands in this part of the ocean. None of these are very large, and as we are now in a current that is carrying us in nearly the same direction as that in which the winds are blowing us, I think it best to con-

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tinue in this direction in the hopes that before long we will be able to speak a passing vessel."

They continued in the zone of the Southeast Trades for several days, being carried by both winds and current toward the west. Everything now appeared to be working in their favor. It is true that since leaving the Sargasso Sea they had seen neither sails nor steamers, but then again they knew that they might sight them at any moment. This, however, was not to be, for one day, an exceedingly severe storm suddenly struck the brig, carrying away its masts and rudder. The storm ceased almost as suddenly as it began, and while the brig did not seem to have been injured by it, since the nature of its cargo rendered it almost unsinkable, yet they were suddenly left in their former helpless condition of being obliged to go wherever the currents carried them.

They had not failed during all the past two months to throw sealed bottles overboard at the rate of two or three a week. Nearly all of these bottles were equipped with the tiny white flags that had been placed on them in accordance with the plan first suggested by Jack.

All were now in thoroughly good health. The change of air, together with the sound rest it was now possible to obtain at night, had enabled them entirely to recover from the weak condition into which they had fallen while in the Sargasso Sea.

Knowing that a diet containing a reasonable amount of fresh meat and fish was necessary in order to keep

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in good health the captain took every opportunity of shooting the birds that occasionally came within reach. This was done, indeed, ever since they had a life-boat, since no matter where the birds fell, they could be readily picked up. Then again they were successful in catching numerous food-fish that afforded them a very pleasant change in their diet. Sometimes the brig would encounter shoals of various sea-fish such as the bonita, a species of mackerel. They had no difficulty in taking these in great numbers for Hiram had shown the boys how to make nets from strong cotton thread, large quantities of which were found in the stores of the brig. At first they were satisfied with a variety of scoop-net, but the difficulty of lowering this in the water without frightening the fish was so great, that they abandoned it for a much more effective method of fishing. This consisted in the construction of a seine, or a long net provided at the top with floats made from the cork found in the cargo. By attaching small leaden weights to the lower part of the net, it was kept in a vertical position in the water. One end of the seine was permanently fixed by a rope to the stern of the vessel. When required for use the net lowered with the life-boat was soon paid out by the motion of the brig. It can be understood that they would experience some difficulty in hauling the long net back again to the brig by simply rowing the life-boat. But this difficulty was obviated by attaching a strong rope to the other end of the net and keeping this on the brig. In this way, by simply hauling on the

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line they were able to bring the free end back again to the stern of the boat.

It is true that this method was open to the objection, that a large portion of the catch readily escaped by sinking in the water. Their net, however, was made of strong gilling twine, so that so many of the fish were caught by the gills while endeavoring to pass through the meshes that they found no difficulty in catching more fish than they possibly could use.

Of course, fishing of this character was mainly successful during times when the brig was passing through a shoal of fish. It, therefore, frequently happened that a week or more would pass without their being able to place fresh fish on the table.

This absence of fresh fish from the table had such a pronounced effect on Harold, who, like all growing boys, had a prodigious appetite, and who was unusually bright, determined to persuade his uncle to adopt a plan by means of which they could lay up a constant supply of living fish during such times as they were passing through shoals.

“Hiram,” he said, one day, “couldn’t we clear out a small space in the lower hold large enough to form a well in which to keep fish? We could then be assured of fresh fish for the table whenever we needed them.”

“Sartin, Mr. Harold,” replied Hiram, grinning. “It’s a right clever idee. Let’s talk to the cap’in about it.”

The captain heartily approving the plan it was forth-

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with adopted and after a few days of fairly hard work, a fish-well was established in the hold. Since the water trickled through the lower part of the hold so as to constantly fill it with new water the plan was very successful. They soon found, however, that it was necessary to use judgment as to the kind of fish placed in salt-water storage. On several occasions, they found they were ingenuously laying up food not so much for themselves, as for a few voracious animals that they had thoughtlessly placed in the tank with the other fish.

It is needless to say that they caught a great variety of fish such as the mullet, cavally, yellow-tail, bluefish, and other well-known food-fish. Among others, however, they would frequently take many curiously shaped and brilliantly colored fish. These, however, the captain would never permit to be eaten, since as is well known some fish of tropical waters are exceedingly poisonous.

One day, Hiram called the attention of the captain to a small object that could be distinctly seen through the glasses floating on the surface of the water about half a mile directly ahead of them.

"Cap'in," he said, "if I beant mistaken, here's a chance to take on a load of fresh meat."

"What do you mean, Hiram?" inquired Harold, who heard him. "What are you looking at? Is it a cow or an ox that has fallen overboard from some passing steamer?"

"Now quit jollying me," said Hiram, good-naturedly. "Wot I be looken at is a great big lot of the

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best sort of soup that ever slipped down your gullet, and don't ye fergit it."

"Boiling hot?" inquired Harold, laughing.

"No," said Hiram, "I'll allow it hez to be caught and biled afore it's good to eat, but it's thar all the same."

"What does he mean?" asked Harold of his uncle. "Is he looking at anything good to eat if we cook it?"

The brig was drifting directly toward the animal. They were therefore soon near enough to permit Harold to distinctly see the floating object. Instead of replying, the captain handed him the glasses. What Harold saw was an immense sea-turtle of the kind known as the green turtle, not from the color of its shell or carapace, which was of a dark olive mingled with a dingy white, but from the rich green fat that is so highly esteemed by epicures. The animal was lying asleep on the waters.

"Hiram," exclaimed the captain, "get the harpoon-gun. "We'll try to land the harpoon in the animal's shell."

The gun was quickly brought on deck and loaded and since the brig was quietly drifting toward the turtle they had no difficulty in planting the harpoon directly in the middle of its shell. The animal immediately disappeared below the water, but fortunately the harpoon clung to the shell and on lowering the life-boat they succeeded in placing it in the boat and afterward on the brig.

The animal thus secured was between six and seven

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feet in length, and must have weighed something in the neighborhood of from seven to eight hundred pounds. Its head was too large to be drawn into the shell. Like the body of the animal, it was protected by a hard sheath-like covering. The feet were webbed so that these animals are capable of swimming rapidly through the water.

Hiram appeared to be greatly pleased when he placed the first pot of turtle soup on the table in the cabin for they all agreed that it was the most delicious eating that they had had for a long while. The animal they had killed was a female that was almost ready to deposit its eggs.

When ready to lay its eggs the sea-turtle seeks the shore of some lonely island where free from its greatest enemy, man, it makes a hole in the sand with its body, deposits its eggs, and covering them with sand, leaves nature to hatch them out. The simple but ingeniously constructed incubator, under the influence of the sun's heat, hatches out the young turtles which as soon as born, instinctively make for the water. Here wholesale destruction by sharks, fish, and other animals, waiting for their prey, prevent all but a few from attaining full growth.

It is an easy thing to capture a turtle on the land since its shell is so broad and depressed in the middle, that when the animal is turned on its back, it is impossible for it to regain its feet.

For the next few days they had turtle meat in profusion, but the weather being warm and there being no

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way of preserving the food, the remainder soon became too gamy to eat. They were careful, however, to save the upper shell; for, drying it and mending the hole formed by the harpoon, it was employed to the great satisfaction of the boys as a bathtub, as, while the boys were excellent swimmers, yet the frequent appearance of sharks in the water took away the pleasure of such exercise. When, however, Hiram would fill the bathtub with sea-water they could splash about in their magnificent tortoise-shell tub free from any danger of making food for the sharks.

It must not be supposed that turtle soup was the only kind of food Hiram placed on the table from the great animal they had killed. For the meat obtained from portions of the body made most excellent steaks, while from the numerous eggs that were found, of which there were upward of two hundred and fifty, they made splendid omelets, employing for this purpose instead of butter, the rich green fat of the animal.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### CHARLEY

THEY had now been about four and a half months on the derelict, during which time they had been carried by both the currents and winds though mainly by the former, over a great extent of water. Both before and since the catching of the turtle the weather had continued good. A change, however, now occurred; storms became frequent, some of them lasting for several days.

One day Harold came rushing in an excited manner into the cabin where the captain was sitting talking to Jack and exclaimed:

“O Uncle Arthur, the smoke of a steamer can be seen directly ahead of us; at least Hiram thinks it’s a steamer.”

The three ran hurriedly up the companionway to the deck. Hiram pointing to a streak of smoke on the horizon almost directly ahead, exclaimed:

“I’m a’most sartin, cap’in, thet ere smoke comes from a steamer. Her hull is too fer down to be sure, but ef that streak arn’t smoke I’d like to know what it is.”

“I think it is smoke, Hiram,” said the captain. “As you see, it lies with its greatest length in the direction of the wind. However, we are headed directly for it

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so if it is a steamer that is not moving away from us, we should see the body rise above the horizon."

It was an anxious party that stood watching to learn their fate. Should it be a steamer that was not moving away from them and they could succeed in attracting its attention they might reasonably hope to be rescued. But was it a steamer? Might it not be a low-lying cloud? Time alone could tell, so they stood anxiously hoping against hope that it was truly a steamer and that it was coming their way and that they could attract its attention.

"Let's build a fire on the deck and raise another smoke column," said the captain. "They would be able to see that a great way off."

"Cap'in," exclaimed Hiram, "I've cleaned up that ere old gun we took from the pirate vessel in the Sargasso Sea. S'pose I load and fire as soon as we are near enough."

"That's a good idea," said the captain, "get the gun ready, and I'll build a fire with the boys' help."

After half an hour's waiting a long black line could be slowly seen rising above the horizon. On examining it with the glasses they found it to be a steamer.

"It's a steamer, all right," cried Jack.

"Hurrah!" cried Harold, "now there's a chance of my seeing father and mother again."

By this time Hiram had the gun in condition and the captain had set fire to a pile of wood placed on the deck. The fire was burning, and by throwing the water on it occasionally a column of smoke was soon

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rising from it. Would the steamer see them, that was the question that worried them?

"In what direction is she heading, Hiram?" inquired the captain handing him the glasses.

"She's pinting straight toward us," exclaimed Hiram, excitedly. "We're all right at last, Mr. Harold," he said, turning to the lad, "and sense we're goin' straight toward her, and she's comin' straight toward us, it won't be long afore we kin speak her."

"Begin firing, Hiram. Fire minute guns" (guns every minute). They'll understand them as distress signals," said the captain.

"Jack, help Hiram. Harold and I will keep the fire burning."

It soon became evident that the vessel had sighted them and had also heard their signal gun; for, she ran up a flag to her mainmast and discharged a gun thus indicating that she had seen them.

"Hurrah," cried Harold, "she's heading this way."

"She is indeed," cried Jack. "Captain, look at her colors. They are the colors of a flag that we can be sure will never pass us. They are the stars and stripes of the United States of America, a flag I love almost as much as our own dear British flag."

"Dip our distress signal, Hiram," said the captain, "so that they may see we're in trouble. Although, of course, the smoke column from our deck and the minute guns would indicate that without any flag."

The distance between the approaching steamer and the brig was now so much decreased that probably

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less than three miles separated them. It seemed as if nothing could prevent their rescue. Harold could scarcely wait until the distance was short enough to permit them to begin talking.

They had again been looking so intently in one direction that they had failed to take any note of the very angry-looking clouds that were rapidly collecting in the heavens directly back of them. At last seeing them the captain said :

“ Run to the cabin, Jack, and see how the barometer stands.”

“ Very low, sir,” reported Jack, “ and, I think, rapidly falling.”

“ A severe storm is approaching,” said the captain. “ Let us hope that it will not reach us before we speak the steamer and let them know who we are.”

Unfortunately, in certain portions of the tropics storms arise with terrible rapidity, beginning with what those having little experience in the peculiarity of such storms, might think was only a squall. In this case it proved much more than a squall. The dark bank of clouds that first appeared in the west rapidly spread over the heavens, and before the distance between them was markedly decreased, shut the steamer completely from their sight.

“ This is most unfortunate,” cried the captain, “ but let us hope, that having seen us, she will endeavor to remain in these waters until the storm passes. I am sure we may reasonably expect this.”

“ Yes,” exclaimed Jack, “ especially as it is the

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United States flag she was flying; for, the Yankees are certainly the most generous people and most fearless."

"Unless," added Harold, "it be the English."

"Well," said Jack, "I think they are even equal to the English, and I can't say better than that."

They had now plenty to do thinking about their own safety; for, the storm increased rapidly in severity and huge waves were soon formed in the ocean that threatened the safety of any vessel, much less a derelict like the brig.

But, perhaps, we are wrong in regarding the brig as being especially liable to destruction from high seas. Indeed, it would seem that they were really safer on the brig in the condition in which she existed than the others were on the stanch steamer; for, as long as the brig could hold together, her submerged part being filled with lumber and cork, she was almost unsinkable.

"I am more afraid for the safety of the steamer than I am for our own safety," remarked the captain to Hiram. "Let us hope that the storm will not continue so long that the brig will drift too far away from the steamer for her to help us should she be in a condition to do so."

But it was by no means a short storm that had burst on them. On the contrary, it continued for nearly six days, the brig being rapidly carried by the ocean currents and the winds through the stormy seas. Toward the close of the first day of the storm it

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became evident that the steamer, or at least some other in the neighborhood, was in distress; for, every minute a gun was heard firing from a direction over the bow of the brig.

“I fear those minute guns are a signal from the steamer that has passed us. She has apparently been injured during the storm.”

At the moment the gun was heard, the distance between the steamer and the brig was so small that although in the darkness, for it was then night, they were unable to see it, yet the flash distinctly located its position.

While they stood looking in the direction of the flash; for, of course, it was but momentary, leaving the part of the ocean in which it had been seen darker than before, a bright bluish light was seen.

“They are burning a bengola light,” said the captain, “to let us see where they are.”

As is probably known by most of my readers a bengola light, or as it is sometimes called a bengal light, is frequently employed at sea as a signal. The powder employed in this light is composed of chemicals that are capable of burning with such fierceness, that when lighted, it cannot be extinguished by the strongest wind. It gives out a bright blue light that can be seen at considerable distances.

Of course, they all watched the burning of the bengola light. Evidently, from the increased brilliancy of the light, the distance between the two vessels was rapidly decreasing for the light burned brighter and

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brighter until at last they could see the faint gleam of the lights on the steamer.

It must be remembered that having lost their jury-rudder as well as their sails the brig was entirely at the mercy of the currents and the winds. Some idea may, therefore, be formed of their horror when they saw the steamer apparently heading directly for the brig. But they could do nothing except to cry out at the tops of their voices so as to let the steamer know their location. Although they cried as loud as possible, yet the roar of the wind, and the noise of the waves, were so great that they might as well have kept quiet; for, the sounds were entirely unheard amid the roar of the elements.

As the distance between the two vessels rapidly decreased they saw a magnificent steamer in a crippled condition approaching them. Her masts were broken, her smokestacks missing; and a portion of her rail had been swept away.

It seemed that nothing could prevent the brig being knocked into pieces by the collision of the rapidly approaching immense mass of iron. Fortunately, however, the captain, or at least the officer in charge of the steamer at that time, was a cool-headed man; for, seeing the great danger to both vessels, he evidently gave commands which caused the vessel to swerve suddenly and pass them so closely to the windward as to almost touch. Of course, they could not hear these commands, although they were then side by side. They could, however, see that the steamer was in great

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distress and could even distinguish different objects on deck. The steamer was evidently sinking for they were apparently getting ready to launch their life-boats.

The two vessels were moving so rapidly that they were abreast for a much shorter time than has been required for the reader to read this brief description of their passage. In a few moments they had passed each other and soon were lost in the distance.

"I fear, Hiram," said the captain, "we cannot count on any help from that steamer."

"I'm afeered not, sir," was the reply. "I'd a sight ruther be on this brig than on her, sense I don't believe we can sink, and I allow her chances fer sinking are fust-class."

But there was plenty to do on the brig at least so far as thinking was concerned to get their minds off from their unfortunate neighbors, and this was the gradually increasing strength of the waves; for, the brig might easily have been thrown off so as to turn turtle, had it not been for the fact that both the wind and the current were carrying them in the same direction, and especially because her water-logged condition made her lie very low in the water.

The storm continued nearly five additional days without, however, their seeing the steamer again. Finally, nearly six days after the storm began, the skies commenced to clear in the direction in which the wind was coming, and in a few hours the storm had passed, the sky cleared, the sun came out, and although the

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waves were still high, yet the ocean was rapidly becoming smoother. Of course, their first thought was of their neighbor. Had she escaped? Was she still in the neighborhood? Was she in a condition to give them any help? Or did she need the help they were ready to extend to her? But though they searched the horizon in every direction with their glasses, there was nothing in sight.

“She has probably gone down,” remarked the captain.

“I’m afeered so,” said Hiram. “And ef she took to the sea in her life-boats, her crew has pussibly gone arter her.”

The sea rapidly calmed, and for hours afterward they scanned the waters through their glasses in the hope that some of the boats might still be seen floating. Finally, near the middle of the day, Harold, who had been left alone on the deck with Hiram, it then being their watch, ran excitedly to Hiram exclaiming:

“I think I see a floating boat out there on the water,” pointing to a point at least a mile distant on their starboard side.

Hiram seized the glasses and looking through them instantly exclaimed:

“I reckon you’re right about it. Run to the cabin and tell the captain thet a floating life-boat is in sight on our starboard bow.”

That Harold had news of a most important character to tell the captain and Jack who were in the

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cabin was so evident by his very footsteps that both the captain and Jack met him at the companionway.

“What is it?” inquired the captain, looking at Harold’s excited face.

“A life-boat in view on our starboard bow.”

Rushing to the deck he joined Hiram and inquired: “Where is it, Hiram?”

Hiram pointed to the spot, and the captain at once examined it with the glasses, and exclaimed:

“It is a life-boat. What can you make out in it, Hiram?”

“Four or five bodies, sir,” was the reply.

“Alive or dead?” was the inquiry.

“I feer they be dead, sir. At least they are wery quiet and still ef they have any life in them.”

“Stand ready to lower the life-boat, Hiram,” exclaimed the captain. “We must pick up that boat.”

“Fortunately,” said Hiram, “we’re drifting now almost dead on, so we’ll not pass wery fer from it.”

This was indeed a fortunate circumstance, since there might have been some difficulty in their lowering their life-boat, reaching the drifting boat, and then being able to regain the brig. The current in which they were then drifting was fortunately far from rapid, so that they had very little difficulty in lowering the boat which was manned by the captain and Jack.

It was indeed an awful sight that presented itself as they rowed their life-boat after the drifting boat. It contained five people, four men and a lad about Harold’s age. The men were dead. Indeed, their bodies

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had begun to putrefy, and the boy was so nearly gone that he did not even open his eyes when they reached the boat and secured it to the stern of their boat and returned with it to the brig.

The sight of dead bodies is always appalling. There is a natural feeling of repugnance which causes most of us almost unconsciously to dislike coming near them, and this Jack felt keenly, but when the captain, after a hasty examination, informed Jack that the boy was living, he had no hesitation in aiding him to place a little water obtained from their boat to the lips of the boy, although in order to do this he had to pass over the dead bodies of the four men in the boat.

The water evidently revived the lad, although not sufficiently to enable him to regain consciousness, or, indeed, even to lead to the opening of his eyes.

“Help me lift the lad into our boat,” said the captain, “and then let us row as quickly as possible to the brig where we will have better chances for resuscitating him.”

“Do you think he will die, captain?” inquired Jack, anxiously.

“He may die,” was the reply, “but he appears to be a well-built lad and has youth in his favor. If we are careful to prevent him from eating too much at first I think we can save his life. But let us pull rapidly for the brig, we’ll tow the boat and the dead bodies after us.”

They reached the brig after ten minutes’ hard row-

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ing and at last succeeded in bringing their life-boat together with the strange boy on deck.

And now something very curious happened. Rompey, who had been standing alongside of Harold while the boat was approaching them, manifested great excitement. Looking earnestly up into his young master's face, and shaking his tail, he made a variety of sounds as if he were anxious to communicate something of importance to him.

"Why, what is the matter, Rompey?" inquired Harold. "Does the sight of the dead bodies in the boat scare you?"

But Rompey's excitement increased rather than abated, and when at the captain's request their life-boat was raised on the deck with the still insensible body of the strange boy, his excitement increased, and when they had lifted the boy out of the boat and were tenderly carrying him to the cabin, Rompey rushed toward the lad and commenced licking his face.

"Look at Rompey, uncle," exclaimed Harold. "He looks as if he recognizes the boy."

"Yes, Harold," was the reply. "And do you know," he added, "I would not be surprised if this is the Charley we have imagined was Rompey's first master."

"I hope so," replied Harold. "I'll try him. Rompey," he continued, addressing the dog, "where's Charley? find Charley."

The excitement of the poor animal now greatly increased, and placing one paw on the body of the boy



*“The excitement of the poor animal now  
greatly increased”*

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who had now been placed on Harold's bunk in the cabin, he looked up into Harold's face and wagging his tail commenced to bark in a joyous manner.

Whether it was the barking of the dog, or a small glass of port wine mixed with water they had at once given him, that resuscitated the boy, we will not assert. But, momentarily opening his eyes, and apparently seeing only the dog, he exclaimed in a feeble voice:

"Hello, Rompey, good dog, where did you come from?" while the poor animal now almost wild with joy again began barking and otherwise showed great excitement. The little effort, however, was apparently too much for the boy, who again closed his eyes and became unconscious.

"We're right," said the captain, "this is Charley. Let us get off his wet clothing, and put him comfortably to bed. Harold, you must let him have your berth for to-night."

"Certainly, Uncle Arthur, I'll be more than glad to do so. It's a good-sized berth and plenty big enough for both of us, and if as I hope, Charley and I will get to be chums, for I like his looks, and he's just about my age, he may share it with me, as long as we are together on the brig. Of course, I must give Rompey up, now, as dearly as I love him, but I think that as Charley and I are going to be great chums he will be willing to give me half of Rompey, he keeping the other half; that is, we can both be masters."

By this time they had removed all of the lad's cloth-

ing, wrapping him in a blanket, while Hiram took the clothes promising to dry them in the sun.

Cautiously giving the boy a little sip of port wine and water every now and then he soon rapidly regained consciousness. The captain had purposely permitted Rompey to remain in the cabin, so that the first thing the boy should see on opening his eyes, should be Rompey. So again on seeing the dog, he exclaimed in wonderment:

“Why, Rompey, how in the world did you get here?” and then seeing Harold, Jack, and the captain, he looked up in a surprised manner, and said: “Where am I?”

“You’re all right, my lad,” said the captain. “You are in the cabin of a brig that picked you out of the life-boat a few hours ago.”

“Yes, you’re all right, Charley,” said Harold, “and I hope you and I are going to become great chums.”

When the strange lad heard Harold call him by name a smile broke out over his face and holding out his hand to Harold, he said:

“That’s my name, sure. I don’t know how you found it out, but as to being chums there will be no trouble about that. Here’s my hand to prove it.”

“That’ll do now,” said the captain, “I wouldn’t talk any more, Charley. You’ve been for a long time without food and water, and are very weak.”

It was evident, however, that something was troubling Charley; for, looking up into the captain’s face he inquired:

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"There were six men in the boat with me, sir. Did you find any of them alive?"

"No, Charley," was the reply, "there were only four men in the boat when we picked it up, and they had been dead apparently for at least a day."

On hearing this the lad turned his face away from him, and the tears began to roll down his face.

"They were no relatives of mine," he said, "only two doctors and four sailors. But they were kind, jolly fellows, and it is sad to hear they are dead. What's your name?" he asked, turning to Jack.

"John Parker Jackson," was the reply.

"And yours?" he inquired of Harold.

"Harold Arthur Harding. And this," he added, turning to the captain, "is my uncle, Captain Arthur Harding, captain of this brig."

"Captain," inquired Jack, "can we not safely give Charley something to eat?"

"I wish you would, Jack," said Charley. "I've had nothing to eat or drink for the last three days. I will tell you about it."

"No, Charley," said the captain firmly, "you must first eat something. What have you brought, Jack?" he continued, turning to Jack, who at this moment entered with some food from the galley.

Jack showed him some articles of food Hiram had given him.

"There's nothing here that Charley can safely eat," said the captain, "but this," and selecting a sweet biscuit, he moistened it with some port wine and fed it

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in small quantities to the lad. "Now," he said, "go to sleep, Charley, and when you wake we'll tell you where you are, and you can tell us all about yourself, where you were going, and where you are from. We will let Rompey stay with you for company."

"And I will stay too," said Harold to his uncle, "if I may, and help Rompey watch."

This offer of Harold's appeared to please Charley very much; for he put his hand in Harold's, and almost immediately fell into a sound peaceful slumber.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### CHARLEY'S STORY

ALTHOUGH Charley woke several times during the night it was only to take a small quantity of nourishment in the form of a biscuit soaked in port wine. When the captain explained to Harold and Jack that Charley's companions had evidently died from starvation and thirst, and that Charley's recovery depended entirely on the care taken in feeding him during the next twelve hours, Harold begged permission to sit up with him all night, so as to be ready to give him the small quantities of nourishment that the captain said he ought to have every few hours should he wake up.

"Please let me sit up, Uncle Arthur," he exclaimed. "I'd like to do something for Charley. I am sure he and I are going to be great chums; at least," he added, "I hope so, for, I never remember seeing a boy that I like as much as Charley."

This strong attraction of Harold for Charley, had, of course, been noticed by all. Indeed, as Jack laughingly remarked: Harold appeared to be even more strongly drawn toward Charley than Rompey had been toward Harold.

"I don't care, Jack," said Harold. "You may jolly me as much as you like, but I certainly like

Charley very much, and only hope he will care for me as much as I do for him. Besides," he added, after remaining silent for a short time as if he had been reasoning about it with himself, "since Charley is Rompey's master, and I am also his master we ought to be great friends. Of course, I must give up Rompey to Charley, but I am sure he will let me own Rompey along with him, say Charley one-half, and I the other half."

Though the captain permitted Harold to sit up and be Charley's nurse, the lad was not the only nurse, for the captain kept him company the greater part of the night. He knew full well the importance of seeing that the lad received proper nourishment in small quantities, whenever he should wake up, and he felt sure he would often wake by reason of his hunger.

The captain left Harold sitting watching Charley. Taking Jack with him they aided Hiram in removing the dead bodies of the four men from the life-boat and placing them on deck, afterward carefully drawing up the life-boat, which was a much better boat than the one built by Hiram.

The four men must have been dead for several days; for, under the exposure of the hot sun and the moist air, putrefaction had set in, and there was an immediate necessity for burying them. They removed some small articles found on the bodies, hoping at some time to be able to send them to the dead men's friends. As the captain explained to Hiram and Jack they would not bury them until the next day, since Charley would

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naturally desire to see the bodies, so as to know which of them disappeared from the boat. They then aided Hiram in sewing up the bodies in blankets leaving the faces exposed, but enough of the blankets unsewed readily to cover them while being prepared for burial. Before closing the blanket at the feet, a number of sash-weights, from the hardware in the hold, were placed in the blankets so as to insure the rapid sinking of the bodies. When this was done the four bodies were laid in order on the deck, and covered with a blanket.

Toward midnight being assured from the condition of Charley's pulse that it would be safe to give him more nourishing food, the captain asked Hiram to prepare a good cup of tea, together with a small quantity of canned chicken soup, and a piece of toasted biscuit. Charley, awakening shortly after Hiram brought the food into the cabin, Harold fed him with small quantities at a time. That Charley greatly enjoyed the more substantial food was evident from the smile that broke out over his face as he was eating it; for, looking at Harold, he said in a weak voice:

"Thank you; that's very good; I like you," almost immediately again falling into a deep sleep.

Early next morning, long before either the captain or Jack had awakened, Charley opened his eyes, wide awake, and looking at Harold exclaimed:

"You're name's Harold. Have you been sitting up all night watching me, and giving me food?"

"Yes, I've been watching you, Charley," was the reply. "How are you feeling?"

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"Oh, I'm all right; I'd like to get up, but where are my clothes?"

"We took them off yesterday to have them dried. They are here, shall I help you to put them on?"

"No," replied Charley, "I won't trouble you to dress me. I'm certainly old enough to dress myself," he said smiling.

"All right, Charley," was the reply, "but don't forget you are still weak. Go on dressing and if you find you want help, call out, and I'll help you."

It did not take long for Charley to discover that he was too weak to be able to dress himself without assistance, so in a few moments, he looked at Harold, and smiling, said:

"You're right, Harold. I am weaker than I thought. I guess you had better play nurse and dress me."

When the dressing was completed, the exertion had been so great even with Harold's help, that Charley found it necessary to lie down on the berth.

"Now wait awhile," said Harold to him, "and I'll go and see if I can get you something to eat. Hiram will be in the galley at this time, and the captain told me to give you small quantities of food whenever you wanted it. Do you want it now?" he continued.

"Try and see," replied Charley, smiling.

In a few moments Harold returned with a cup of tea and a slice of toasted biscuit.

"I thought it best not to bring much, as I hope you will be able to take breakfast with us. Anyhow I

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should like the captain to see you before you attempt to eat a full meal."

When he was done eating Charley again fell into a refreshing sleep, from which the captain had Harold awaken him a few moments before breakfast was on the table, telling him to bring Charley to the table, when the four bells rang.

While sitting by the side of the berth talking together four bells rang.

"Hello," said Charley, "six o'clock. Does that mean breakfast?"

"Yes, do you feel like walking to the table?"

"Oh, yes," said Charley, "I'm all right," and he was soon seated at the table where he found the captain and Jack.

"Good morning, Charley," said the captain, "how are you feeling now?"

"Very well, captain," said Charley, smiling, "I feel all right; only I'm as hungry as a bear. Indeed, I feel as if I could eat my head off right now and then call for more."

"Which would be a very remarkable thing," replied Jack, laughing; "for a thoroughly well boy to do, let alone a boy who has been as nearly dead as he could well be."

"That's so," said Charley, laughing. "You're name's Jack, ain't it?"

"Yes, Charley," replied Jack, "and I hope that you, Harold, and I will have great times together."

"It won't be my fault if we don't," was the reply,

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“ for I don’t think there will be much trouble in having all kinds of fun with two boys like Harold and you.”

After feeling Charley’s pulse the captain said :

“ Charley, I’m glad to say that I can see no reason now why you cannot safely take a good meal. I have asked Hiram to prepare you a good cup of chocolate with condensed milk, and have had him bake a bluefish taken from our fish-well in the hold of the boat. So begin eating ; take small mouthfuls, chew your food thoroughly, and enjoy yourself.”

“ Thank you,” said Charley, “ I’ll do all of that, even the chewing part, though I warn you that will bother me, for I am almost ravenous.”

When they had nearly finished eating breakfast, the captain said :

“ Now, Charley, if you feel able to do so, we will be glad to have you tell us who you are ; how you got into the boat in which we found you ; where you were going ; and anything else you’re willing to tell strangers. As for ourselves, with the exception of Hiram, the man you saw bringing in the breakfast, the entire crew of the brig is in this room,” then explaining briefly how they had been shipwrecked, had been struck by the derelict, adding : “ Harold and Jack will tell you further particulars sometime to-day or to-morrow. Now we’re ready to hear all your story if you are ready to tell us.”

“ I’m ready, captain,” was the reply, “ but before I say anything about myself, let me tell you how much I am obliged to all of you for the kindness you’ve shown

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me. And especially, Harold, to you," he added, looking affectionately at him, "for sitting up with me all night, and taking such good care of me."

"To begin with," he continued, "my name is Charles Young Pleasanton. I'm thirteen years and a half old."

"Just my age," said Harold, interrupting him.

Looking smilingly toward Harold as if the fact of their being of the same age greatly pleased him, Charley continued:

"My mother and father are both living in Melbourne, Australia. Some six months ago, my father was unexpectedly called to London on important business and wishing to give me a pleasure trip took me with him. My pet collie, Rompey," he said, fondling the animal, who was greatly pleased at the petting of his master, "of course, greatly missed me. I wanted to take him to England with me, but quite naturally, father objected, so the dog was sent to one of father's sheep ranges in the southwestern part of Australia. You do not know that Rompey is a great sheep dog. I brought him to Melbourne from the range on which he was born. I generally passed my vacation on this range. We have two months of holidays in the school at Melbourne, which I attended. Rompey, who had greatly missed me, seemed to believe he was to meet me at the range; for, whenever he could get the opportunity, he would break loose and visit all the places where he and I spent most of our time when in the open air.

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“ Father had a great number of rowboats which he kept for the convenience of the people in charge of the range.”

“ Yes, I know,” interrupted Harold, “ we found Rompey in a boat marked ‘ No. 23.’ ”

“ Yes, that was my boat; I called it ‘ 23 ’ for fun,” said Charley, smiling. “ Shortly after reaching London, I learned from a letter sent me from the man in charge of the range that whenever Rompey managed to escape from his kennel he would wander unhappily about trying to find me. And when unsuccessful in finding me, they would generally find him lying down in my boat in the seat I generally occupied, moaning as if in great grief. As the letter informed me, my boat was one day found missing, the painter having become untied, we all concluded that poor Rompey had been carried to sea and was lost.

“ Father had only intended to remain in London for a few weeks, but unexpectedly found it necessary to be away for several months. Being unwilling that I should miss my school work for so long a time he told me that he would prefer my returning home alone. ‘ Besides,’ he added, ‘ mother will be missing you.’ He said, however, that if I felt at all timid about returning by myself I could stay. I saw, though, that father wished me to return; and, indeed,” he added with a smile, not unaccompanied by a sorrowful look, “ he knew me well, so that when he spoke about my being timid that settled the matter. For,” he added, looking toward the two boys, “ when you know me

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better, you will find that I'm not the kind of a boy who is apt to feel lonely or timid. I, therefore, determined to return home, and father succeeded in placing me on a steamer bound for Melbourne in charge of the captain, with whom father had very friendly relations.

"We had a pleasant voyage from London, and passed through the Straits of Magellan safely, and were at last steaming steadily to the west. When nearly midway between Australia and South America, for I remember seeing where the captain had marked our situation on the chart, the captain having kindly given me a berth in his cabin, one of the sailors came into the cabin and reported to the captain that a brig had been sighted in distress, without any masts and a signal fire burning on deck from which a column of smoke was rising."

"That was our brig, Charley," said the captain.

"Was it, indeed," was the reply. "How strange things happen. We changed our course and was heading for the brig when a gun-shot was heard from the brig, and a distress signal was raised. Since we were now heading directly for the brig we would soon have been within speaking distance had it not been for a severe storm that rapidly overtook us, so shutting out the light that we completely lost sight of you. This storm, as you know, continued for nearly a week. Early during the storm, our steamer became unmanageable having broken its twin-screw propellers, and was soon in a sinking condition from the seas striking her amidships. We were, therefore, obliged

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to take to the boats. The captain wishing to give me the best chance for my life insisted that I should go on one of the other boats with four of the crew and our Doctor Graham and his assistant Doctor Bulcher; for, of course, the captain intended to be the last man on the steamer, and since she was in a sinking condition when the boats were put off, the boat on which he left would necessarily have the smallest chance of escaping.

"The boat in which I was placed was separated from the rest of the other boats."

"How odd," said Harold, again interrupting Charley, "that is just what happened to our boat when we were obliged to leave the Ketrel after it was wrecked in the China Sea. But excuse me," he added, "I will tell you about that afterward."

"I cannot tell you all our sufferings while on the boat," continued Charley. "We had the great misfortune to have all our food supplies and fresh water swept overboard, so that in addition to the hard work required for keeping the boat's bow onto the waves we began to suffer greatly from hunger and thirst. The men in the boat were very kind to me. Indeed," he added, "I strongly suspect that the doctor and his assistant generously gave me a part of their food and drink, and it is to that fact I owe my life. I have only a confused recollection of what occurred during the last few days. Finally I lost consciousness and remember nothing until I opened my eyes for a moment and found myself in this cabin. Captain," he

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added, anxiously, "you say none of the other people in the boat besides me were found living?"

"None of them, Charley," said the captain, with a sorrowful look. "I regret to say that they were all dead, and, indeed, you were so nearly dead that it required very delicate handling to prevent the little life that remained in you from disappearing."

"And how many bodies did you find in the boat?" inquired the lad, anxiously.

"Four," was the reply.

"Then the other two," said Charley, sorrowfully, "must have been swept overboard."

"Most probably so, but then, Charley, such strange things happen at sea, they may have escaped, though I acknowledge that their chances appear to have been very small."

"Captain," said Charley, hesitatingly, "have the bodies been buried?"

"No," was the reply, "I thought you might wish to attend the burial and see the bodies before they were committed to the deep. If you would like to do this and feel strong enough we will attend to it now."

"I am ready," replied the lad in a sorrowful voice.

So they helped him up the companionway and led him to the part of the brig where the four bodies were placed side by side, with their faces still uncovered. After looking sorrowfully at them for a few moments, Charley exclaimed:

"It is the doctor and his assistant who are not here. These are all members of the crew."

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"If you are ready, Charley," said the captain, "I will aid Hiram in sewing up the blankets, so as to cover their faces, and will then read the burial service."

While this was being done Charley noticed that Hiram had already arranged a plank that sloped from a short distance above the deck of the brig toward the water. It was down this inclined plank that the bodies were to be slid to their watery graves.

Everything now being ready, they all stood with bared heads while the captain read the magnificent burial service prescribed for the burying of bodies at sea by the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The event was one that I am sure none of those present will ever forget. They were themselves in a position that might result in their death at almost any moment. They were separated from their dear ones who were probably mourning them as dead, so they were naturally greatly impressed by the beautiful words of the burial service.

"I am the resurrection and the life, said the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Then followed the other beautiful words of the service until the captain read the words especially designed for the burial of the dead at sea:

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“We therefore commit these bodies to the deep, looking for their resurrection on the last day, and the life of the world to come.”

As these words were pronounced, Hiram and Jack lifting the bodies one after another, slid them down the inclined board into the sea at the stern of the vessel. As the bodies struck the water they were immediately carried by the heavy weights below the surface sinking out of sight.

It is to the honor of the onlookers that there was not a dry eye among them. As for Charley, weakened as he had been by long exposure to hunger and thirst, the tears coursed rapidly down his cheeks.

When the last words of the burial service were spoken, the captain whispered to Harold:

“Take Charley down into the cabin and persuade him to lie down. Stay with him, and if you can, get talking with him so as to get his mind off this very sad scene.”

Charley and Harold remained together in the cabin for several hours, the others purposely refraining from joining them. The others never knew what passed between the two lads, but when they came out on deck they all noticed that they seemed to be drawn still more closely together, and from that day were more and more attached to each other.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE WRECK OF THE BRIG

A FEW days after the burial of the four bodies Rompey came into the cabin where Harold and Charley were sitting side by side. Placing one of his paws on each of the boys he looked earnestly into their faces giving a low but joyful whine. He alternately licked them on the face one after the other, as if to say:

“I belong to both of you, do I not? for, I like both of you very much.”

“There,” cried Charley, laughing, “Rompey has decided the question as to who owns him. As you can see he is here offering dutiful allegiance to each of us, so let us agree that both of us are his masters, one-half of him belongs to you and half to me. I’m sure between us we can make him very happy. Do you like both of us, Rompey?” cried Charley.

The animal gave a bark, wonderful in the sounds it contained, and both by the barking and shaking of his tail, but, perhaps, still more by his intelligent looks he seemed to assure them that he liked both of them, and was pleased to have them both as his masters.

Harold and Jack, as well, indeed, as all the rest of them explained to Charley, the curious condition in which they were living on the brig, and gave him a full account of their adventures in the open boat after they

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had seen the Ketrel sink, up to the time when they were run into by the brig during the darkness of the night.

When Charley was told how they were sending messages in corked bottles by the waves and the currents, in the hope of these bottles being picked up by passing vessels, and thus letting their friends know that they were still living and where to look for them, he eagerly joined Harold in the sending of these messages through the post-office of the sea. Now, however, there was added the additional member of their crew who had been picked up in an open boat in the mid-Pacific between South America and Australia.

"You see, Harold," said Charley, "there is a chance in this way of my mother and father learning that I escaped and am safe with you on a brig."

As day after day passed in Charley's company every one on the brig learned to love him more and more; for, he was indeed a very lovable lad. By this I by no means mean that he was in the slightest degree of the girlish type. On the contrary, a more manly little fellow probably did not exist. He was full of fun and mischief, and constantly playing all sorts of tricks and pranks on every one on the vessel, not even excepting the captain. As for Hiram, Charley had apparently carried the old man's heart by storm almost from the moment that he was first brought in an almost dying condition on the brig. With all his mischievous tricks, however, Charley never lost an opportunity of doing a kind and thoughtful act for some of them on

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the brig. He was constantly finding Hiram's pipe for him, when he had temporarily laid it aside and couldn't find it, and filling it for him when empty. While in the cabin, he was only too happy if the captain would let him look for and bring him some particular book from the book-shelf, nor did Jack resent the fact that the new lad had completely captured the heart of his former chum, Harold. On the contrary, Jack soon began to like the little fellow as much as he had Harold, so that he afterward expressed it to the captain:

"I have not lost Harold as a chum, captain. I have gained another chum that I like almost, if not quite, as well as my old chum."

As to the matter of a berth the boys settled that by begging the captain to permit them to sleep in the same berth, and as there was no objection to this, the captain permitted Hiram at his request to build an addition to Harold's berth, so that the two boys could occupy it without being crowded.

I'm sure it is not necessary to tell my boy readers that the two younger lads sleeping immediately under Jack, who occupied the upper berth, played many practical jokes on him, both before and after he had turned in for the night. Jack, however, was perfectly able to take care of himself, and repaid these jokes with full interest much to the delight of the two youngsters.

Charley had not been on deck very long before inquiring the use of the huge tortoise-shell bathtub, and on being informed what they used it for, at once suggested that he and Harold should have it filled.

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This Hiram was always willing to do, and the two lads greatly enjoyed themselves during the middle of the day when the air was very warm.

There was one trait in Charley that greatly surprised them, especially the captain. He was wonderfully well acquainted with the facts of natural history, both as regards the land and water fauna, and greatly interested the captain by the intelligent questions he asked concerning the fish they caught, the birds they shot, and the larger animals they saw from time to time both in the air and the water. Indeed, Charley was quite a little bookworm considering his age, and would often sit poring over the splendid volumes of natural history he found in the doctor's library in the cabin, until the captain would drive him out on the deck, telling him to go take a bath or some other exercise with Harold.

The coming of Charley was very pleasant for all. When a community consists of four people only, the coming of but a single additional member makes a great proportionate increase in their numbers. But when this increase took, as it did in this case, the form of such a lively and likable youngster as Charley, it seemed as though there had been added, not a single additional member only, but many.

They were not destined, however, to remain together much longer in their comfortable quarters on the brig. One day, rather less than two weeks after Charley's coming on board, an exceedingly severe storm struck the brig and continued almost uninterrupted for seven days. During its continuance the

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sea ran high, and for some reason or other the brig instead of keeping its bow well to the waves failed to swing around, so that the waves frequently struck her amidships. To what this behavior was due neither the captain nor Hiram was able to determine. They agreed, however, that it was probably the shifting of the lumber.

The frequent pounding of the sides of the brig made the captain and Hiram so anxious for its safety that at the captain's direction they constantly wore the life-belts, that it will be remembered they had prepared by sewing bits of cork in strips of canvas. Of course, Hiram prepared a life-belt for Charley as well as two small belts to be so passed around Rompey's body as to insure his floating with his head erect.

One day when they felt that almost any hour the brig might go to pieces Harold said to Charley:

“Charley, do you know how to swim?”

“Like a duck,” was the reply. “I was considered one of the best boy swimmers in Melbourne, and can easily keep swimming for several hours.”

The storm instead of decreasing, increased in intensity, until the beginning of the seventh day when they observed that the sky began to grow lighter, and the wind to die down, though it was still very strong and the sea was running high. They were all on deck; the brig had been pounded so mercilessly by the waves that they knew that at any moment it might go to pieces. As they were standing looking in the direc-

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tion of the bow, they were surprised to hear Hiram suddenly call to the captain :

“ Breakers on the starboard bow, sir ! ”

Looking in the direction indicated they saw a heavy line of white foam and heard the sound of breakers. The brig was being driven directly toward these, and at last was near enough for them to see the waves dashing furiously against a sunken rock, while farther on, at a distance of about a mile from the brig, could be seen the low sandy beach of a coral island and back of it the waving green plumes of many groves of the cocoanut palms.

The sky had been rapidly growing lighter and at this moment the sun coming out they could distinctly see that the vessel was being driven directly toward the reef.

Seeing that the brig must be dashed on the reef they dove into the water only a few moments before a severe shock was heard, and they were all surrounded by the floating pieces from the brig, which had broken in two on striking the reef and soon afterward had in part broken up.

“ But we have reached the end of “ Five Months on a Derelict.” Our friends had been on the derelict brig exactly five months from the day they boarded it in the China Sea, up to the time they had been forced to leave it by plunging into the ocean just before it struck against the submerged reef. Those who wish to read about the interesting adventures they after-

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ward had will find them recounted in the second volume of the "Pacific Series," entitled, "Wrecked on a Coral Island."

I will not, however, leave our friends in the water without saying that they all safely reached the coral island where they spent many happy days.

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